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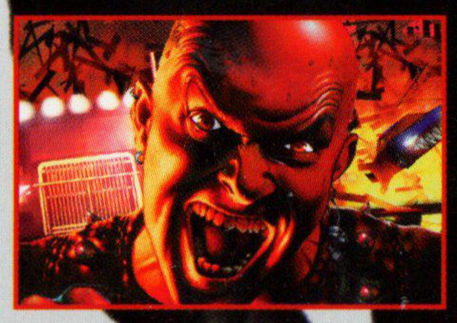
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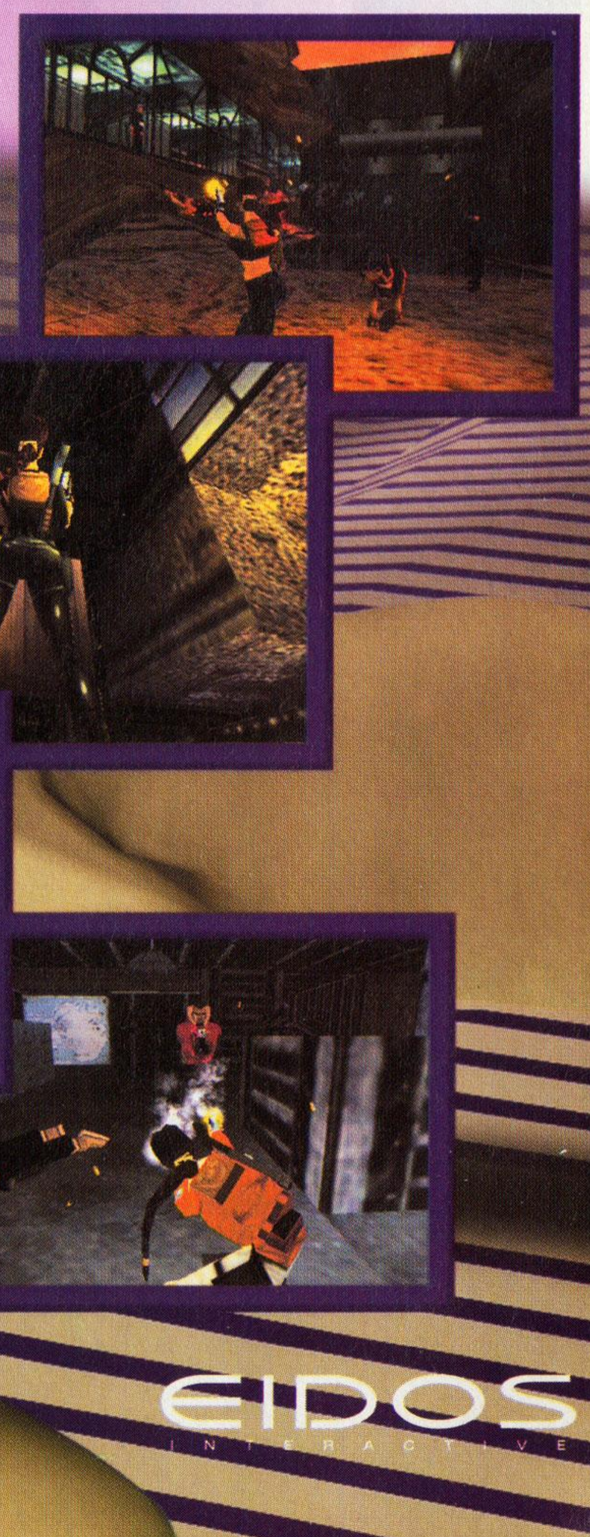
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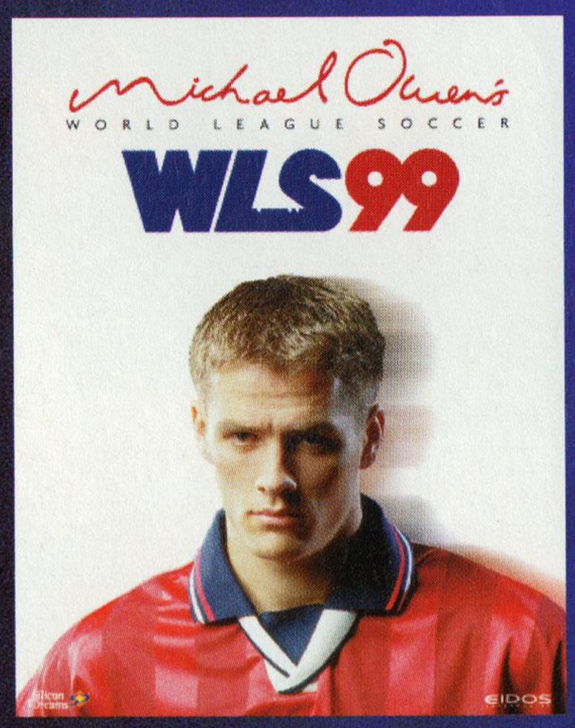
"Get yourself Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99, probably the closest thing to the beautiful game itself."

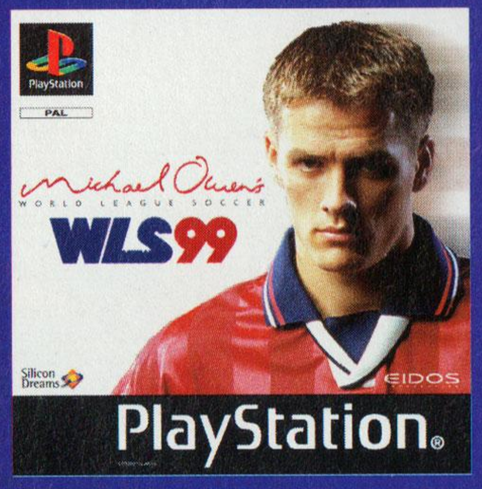
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...oh, and Michael Owen.

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PlayStation

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EIDOS INTERACTIVE

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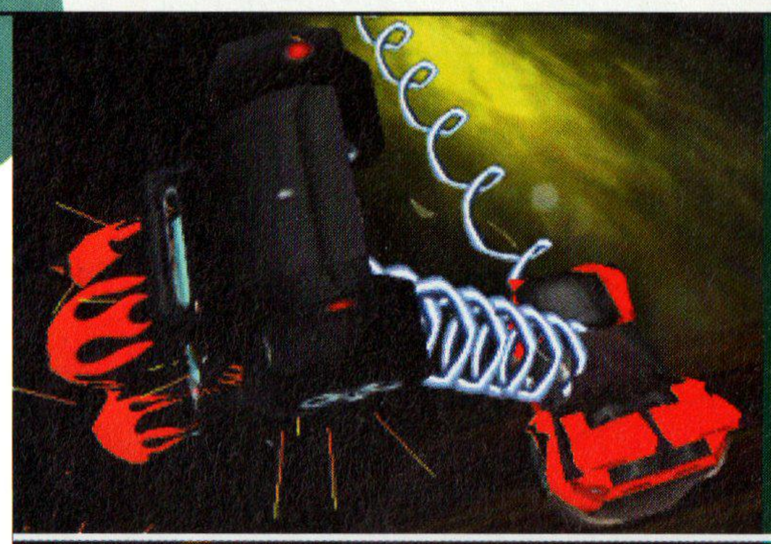
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CARMAGEDDON II 030

Hit and run is the name of the game, proof that any moving vehicle is a lethal weapon in the right/wrong hands



RESIDENT EVIL 2 046

The bloodthirsty PlayStation classic is finally coming to the PC. Bring a cushion, and join us for a preview



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 050

Little-known Czech developers Illusion Softworks have captured the reality of World War II



JET FORCE GEMINI 052

The next big release from BAFTA award winners Rare has everyone round here salivating over their N64s



SILVER 054

Following our Alpha Report in issue three, we've finally managed to get hold of a copy of this stunning new RPG from Infogrames

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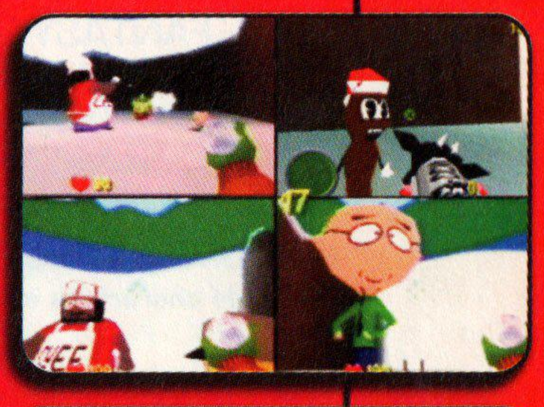
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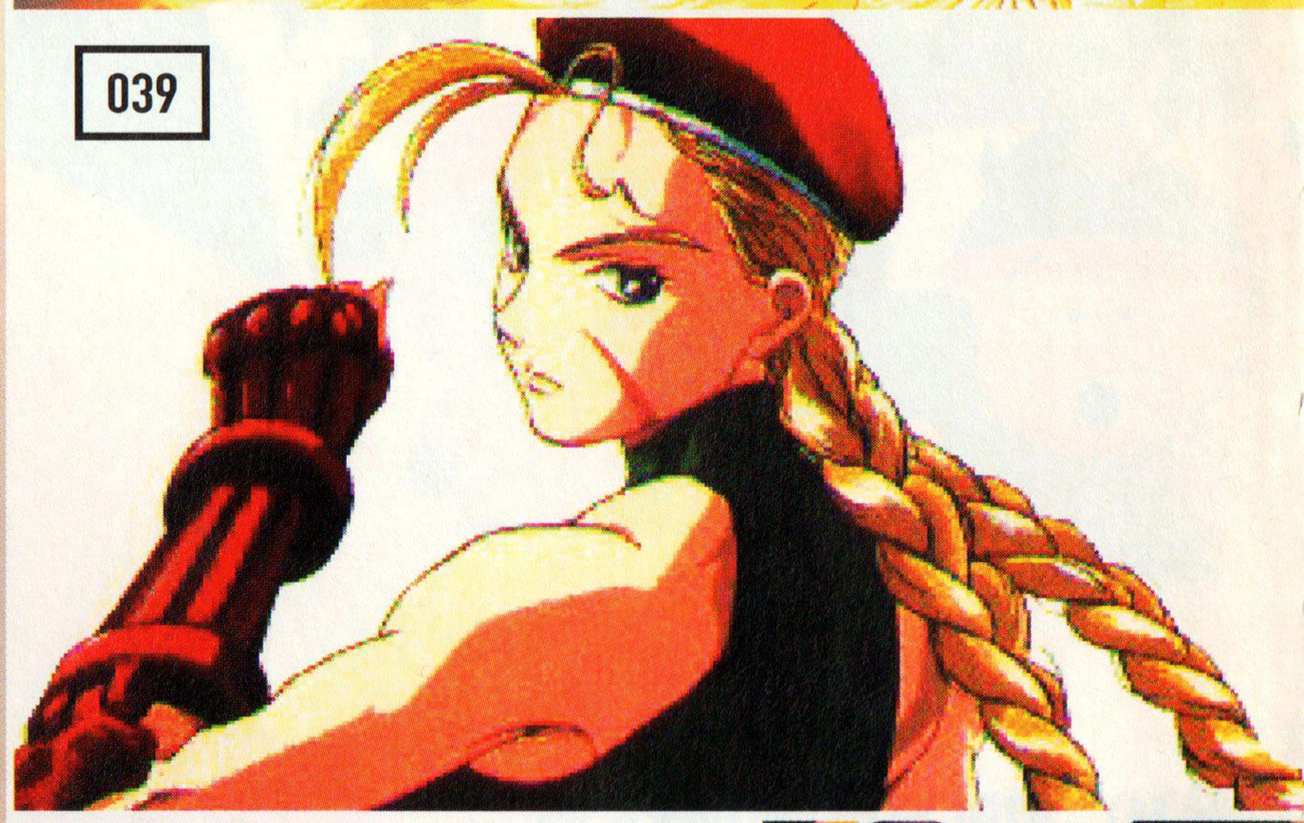
WARNING
This game is recommended for mature audiences only. It contains adult language and content.

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C IN CONTROL









C

FEATURE

026 FINAL FANTASY VIII
The sequel with a harder act to follow than any other, we play an early English language version of this inevitable classic

039 Women in Videogames
Simon Dominguez takes an in-depth look at the changing role of female characters in the video game industry

060 The History of the RPG
RPG addict, Rachel Ryan examines the history of this increasingly popular genre









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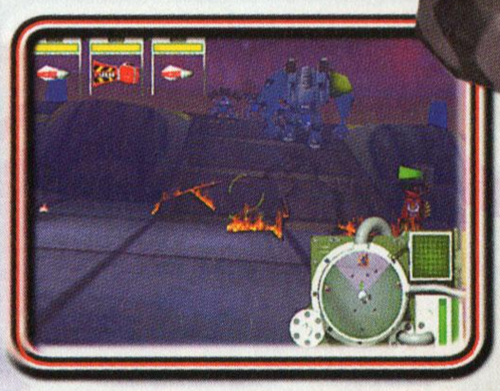
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C IN CONTROL

THOSE IN CONTROL

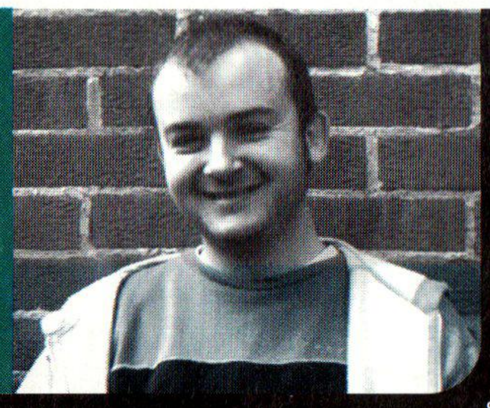


JUSTIN

Half-Life continues to dominate our after-hours gaming sessions, but, of course, we still have to devote time to other titles during the course of a month to fill a magazine the size of Total CONTROL. Occasionally we find ourselves stuck with a game that we really don't want to be playing, but I'm happy to say that I think the overall standard of new releases is improving, and we are able to enjoy our jobs all the more for it.

This month I've been fortunate enough to play the likes of *Championship Manager 3*, *Rainbow Six: Eagle Watch* and *Silver* between the hours of 10am and 6pm before going home to continue my quest in *Zelda*.

The observant amongst you may have noticed that our pagination has decreased this month. Don't be alarmed – we simply decided that if there weren't enough games in a month to fill the magazine, we'd rather lose the pages than compromise on their quality.



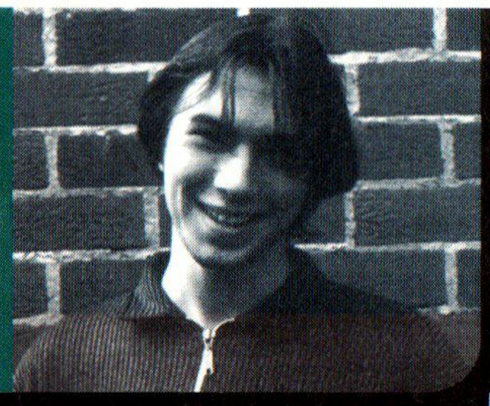
NICK

It's tradition at this time of the year that the video game industry goes into its winter hibernation. As a result, quality games are few and far between. Fortunately for us, the Japanese market is as vibrant now as it is at any time of the year. Two games have stood out: *Sega Rally 2* and Nintendo's *All Star Smash Brothers*. It's great to see that quality software like this can be released in the middle of winter, and it's no coincidence that Nintendo and Sega have both released such games for similar reasons. Nintendo's is one of trying to establish the N64 in their home market (STILL, after three years) and continue the momentum initiated by *Zelda 64*. Sega are trying to do the same thing but from a fresh point of view. The result is healthy competition which in the short-term results in good news for the consumer. There can be no doubt that Sony's dominance in the market has led to better and cheaper software – even if it isn't on PlayStation.



CLIFF

This month, I have mostly been playing with expensive toys. Justin has given me the Hard Stuff section to play with, so I've been on the phone to lots of companies who make those high-tech gadgets we all love but can't afford, persuading them to send me stuff in for review – not just games peripherals either, but entertainment-related stuff in general. First to arrive was the delicious DVD-L10 from Panasonic, which has caused quite a stir around the office, and the excellent Psion 3mx palm-top computer – it's just a pity that this stuff has to go back when we're done with it. I'll be getting more techno-toys in next month, but in the meantime we've got loads of great games for you as well. Check out Sid Meier's latest epic strategy game *Alpha Centauri*, and our Beta Look at *Jet Force Gemini* from the masters of the N64, Rare. All good stuff, as I'm sure you'll agree.



WILL

The NeoGeo hand-held has now turned up in the UK, and Bandai's *Wonderswan* will shortly be available on import from Japan. These new consoles alongside the VMS and PocketStation should represent the next generation of hand-helds, but 'next generation' hardly seems like the right phrase. From what I've seen they all look like very good machines, but it still seems like the hand-held industry has been struggling to advance from the days of the Game Boy, Lynx and Gamegear... Why? Although the Lynx was the least popular of them all, it had 16-bit technology and sprite scaling chips similar to those seen in the SNES. With the power, size, and price of the Dreamcast, surely a new console could be created that would better Atari's long-redundant machine? Rumours involving a miniature PlayStation board have been heard... perhaps Sony are preparing to surprise us all in the future?

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REPORTAGE

***QUAKE** III: ARENA* HEADS THIS MONTH'S REPORTAGE AND SONY ANNOUNCE THEIR SUPPORT FOR BANDAI'S WONDERSWAN IN THE HANDHELD BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY. WE'VE ALSO GOT GAMES NEWS ON *DONKEY KONG 64*, *TEAM FORTRESS 2* FROM VALVE, THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF *TUROK 3* AND THE RETURN OF *PARAPPA*...



The new lightning gun is similar to the one found in the original *Quake*, only this time you can do damage over a wider area

QUAKE III ARENA

SHAKE IT BABY

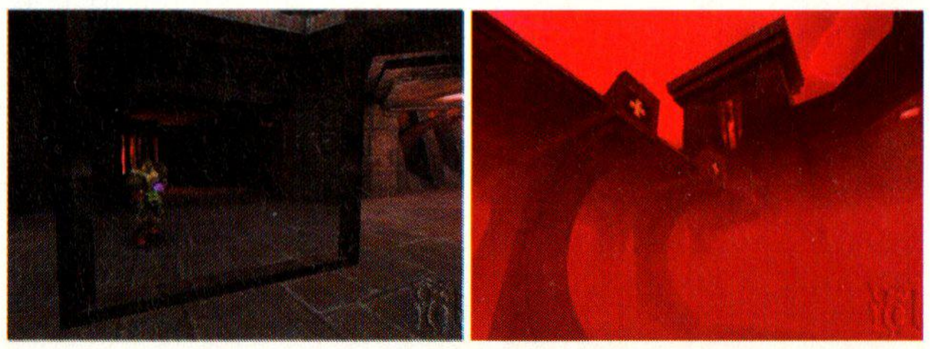
id reveal Quake III Arena details

If you were to ask a hundred PC owners which game they are looking forward to in the next twelve months, the chances are that 99 of them would answer *Quake III Arena*. Both *Quake* and *Quake II* were an Internet phenomenon – arguably the first games to hook games players to the joys of on-line gaming. As a testament to this, id Software have based their latest *Quake* game around the idea of deathmatch and all the multitude of variations that amateur Quake programmers have dreamt up over the past few years.

Concentrating on multiplayer might be seen as a risk taken by id, but then they are in the financial position to take such a risk. John Carmack, project leader, thinks that the game might not do as well as *Quake II* and would be "pleasantly surprised" if *Quake III* did better.

So what's different about *Quake III* that sets it apart from the rest of the other deathmatch games? Well, first of all, the game looks to make a similar graphical leap from *Quake II* that that game made from the original. The game will only run with a graphics card, preferably Voodoo 2 (or equivalent) or better. In short, *Quake III* includes 24-Bit colour, curved surfaces, volumetric fog, mirrors and a massively improved polygon count. But as all deathmatch players know, the look of the game is not important– it's the design, physics and weapons that play the largest part. It seems that only the fog and the mirrors will have any bearing on the gameplay, and fog in particular will have a drastic bearing on gameplay. This reduces visibility to no more than ten feet and silhouettes of players can be seen at fifteen feet. Obviously it will be no good just tearing around levels – the fog encourages players to be more cautious in movement, and stealth will become a major element to gameplay. Fog also appears at different levels – it is possible that this will appear at waist height so you can duck down and take cover. Mirrors also bring possibilities into gameplay – reflections can lead to confusion, and indeed traps can be set using mirrors.

Quake III also introduces three player classes into the equation - light, medium, and heavy. Each of the classes is

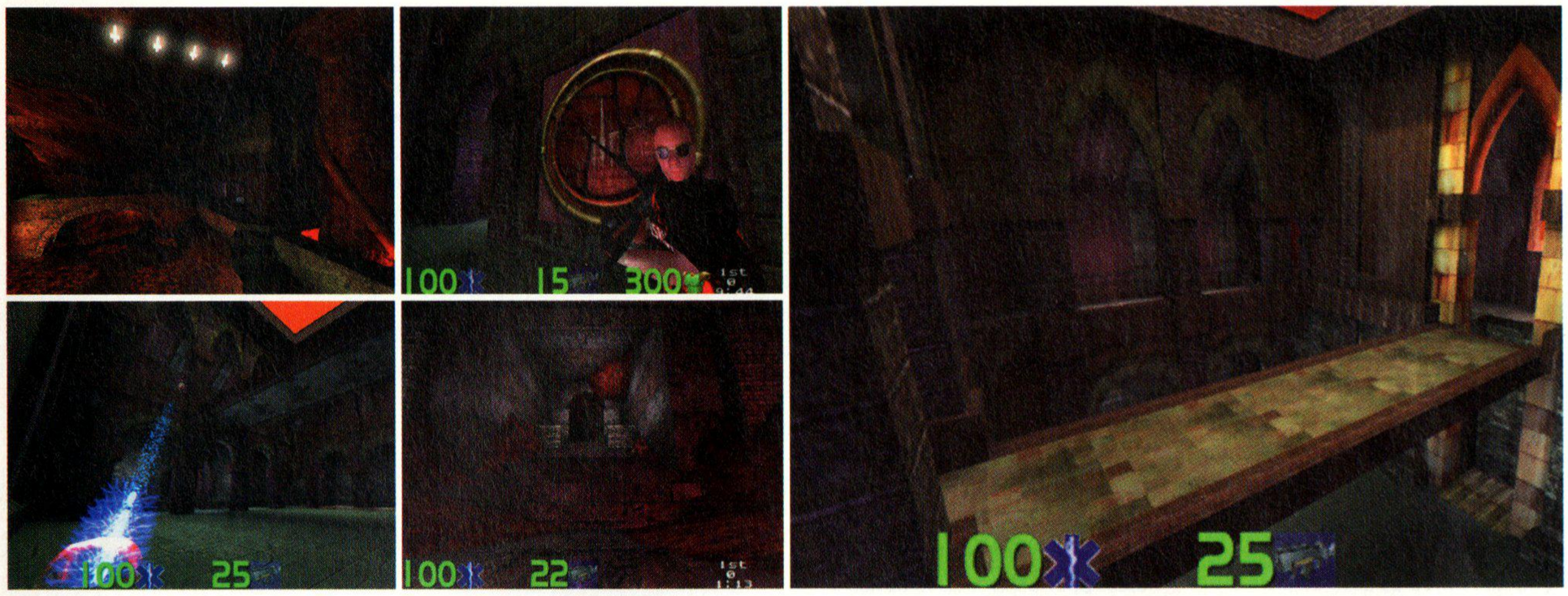


Two new effects: mirrors (left) and the impressive volumetric fog

SHAKEN AND STIRED

The forthcoming PlayStation Bond game, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, will feature a multiplayer mode, developers MGM have revealed. The game was due for release last summer but was delayed for an unknown reason. Now that the multiplayer mode has been revealed, fans shouldn't mind too much. MGM's home page had this to say, "*Tomorrow Never Dies* on PlayStation will support head-to-head multiplayer combat. It will continue the tradition of rich, involving gameplay with each level featuring multiple mission objectives, special weapons and Q gadgets that are essential to a Bond game. New to the *Tomorrow Never Dies* series is the ability to ski, allowing for even more expansive and immersive play experiences."

Total CONTROL's REPORTAGE is produced in association with
FGN Online – www.fgnonline.com



The new *Quake III* engine will have to go some to beat *Half-Life*. Judging by these shots, however, it seems that it will be the best 3D engine ever

scored on three categories – speed, damage power, and armour. The light player has the most speed but the least damage and armour, and the heavy player has the most armour and damage but the least speed. The medium player is average. What effect this has over gameplay remains to be seen, and it is likely that most players will choose the medium character; hard-core fans will no doubt specialise.

The levels themselves have yet to be finalised, but *Quake III* will ship with levels specifically designed for one on one matches, large deathmatch maps, and levels specifically designed for teamplay. The actual look and design so far is in a variety of styles, from the original *Quake* and *Doom* to the futuristic setting of *Quake II*, as well as some new looks. *Quake III* will also feature beginner's levels (on a single plane and no vertical fighting), there will be no ladders (apparently these slow down gameplay), jump pads similar to those found in *Half-Life*, and variations of gravity.

Quake III will also bring back a few of the weapons seen in the original and *Doom*, namely the lightning gun (*Quake*), and the Plasma Gun (*Doom*). The BFG will also return but in a vastly different form. This will be similar to the *Quake II* rail gun but fire at a chain gun rate and explode on contact like the original BFG. As you can imagine, this makes for an extremely powerful gun. A flame-thrower will also be included and players can be set on fire, taking damage for as long as they are alight. Weapons that return from *Quake II* (although modified) will be the rail gun, super shotgun, machine gun, rocket launcher, and the grenade launcher.

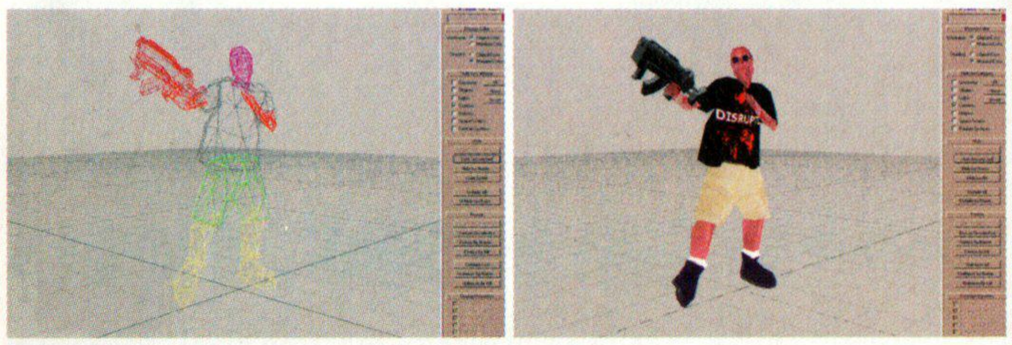
Power-ups in *Quake III* include Triple Damage, Invisibility (think the Predator films), Regeneration (regenerates health at fifteen per second up to 100 and then five per second up to 200), a Jetpack, and a personal teleporter.

There will also be plenty of subtle changes to gameplay that make the game more user-friendly for deathmatch. There will be a clearer indication of what weapons and ammo a player has, your cross-hair will reflect how much health you have, and you will be able to tell which side you are being shot at from the direction of the blood splat. Also, player's names will appear in screen when you come into contact with them. Small enhancements, it's true, but important nonetheless to improve deathmatch playability.

There will be a single player game in *Quake III*, but very little is known about this at the moment. What is known is that the game will be based around the multiplayer game and is likely to feature computer controlled 'bots'. It appears that this will serve as no more than practice for the multiplayer game.

Quake III Arena is shaping up to be the best on-line game ever and is likely to eclipse even the achievements of the previous games. Expect the Total CONTROL team to go *Quake III* mad when the game is released in the summer, but until then, we'll keep you informed on the biggest game of the PC year.

QUAKE III ARENA IS SHAPING UP TO BE THE BEST ON-LINE GAME EVER AND IS LIKELY TO ECLIPSE EVEN THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PREVIOUS GAMES





Player models are as impressive as anyting seen in this genre. It is even possible, with the aid of a digital camera, to map your own face on

A LIVING HELL

A few details have emerged about the forthcoming *Resident Evil* games. The first of the games, which is exclusively on Dreamcast, is titled *Biohazard: Code Veronica*. The second will appear on PlayStation, and is quoted as being "completely different" to the previous *RE* games and "much more challenging". According to Capcom, the Dreamcast game can be seen as the true sequel to the PlayStation's *RE2*.

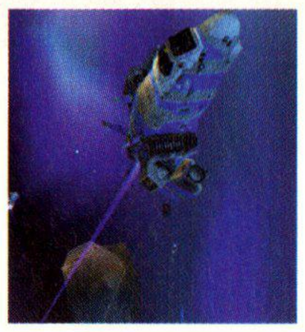
IT'S NEVER ENOUGH

Rumours are rife on the Internet that Nintendo have acquired the rights to the new Bond movie, The World is Not Enough. It is likely that, if the rumours turn out to be correct, the game will be developed by *Goldeneye* developers, Rare. An MGM spokesperson confirmed that Nintendo have bid for the rights, but nothing has been confirmed yet.

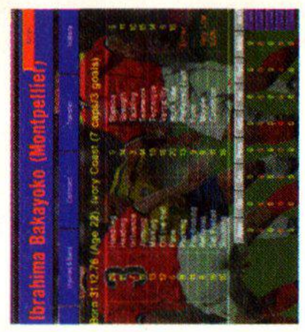
ZELDA BOOK HITS TOP 100

Prima Games' official *Zelda 64* guide has reached the USA today best-seller list. The guide has reached number 80 in the chart and currently holds the number one spot at Amazon.com. "With over 750,000 copies currently in print, Prima's guide to *Zelda* is far and away the best selling guide on the market. Consumer response to our book has been incredible, we look forward to *Zelda* quickly becoming our best selling strategy guide ever," said Debra Kempker, chief spokesperson for Prima Games.

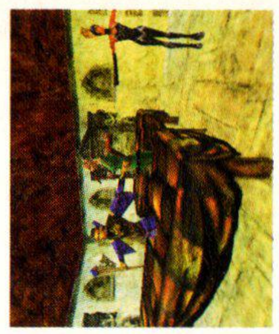
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CM3
EIDOS



ABOMINATION
EIDOS
HEAVY GEAR 2
ACTIVISION
SIM CITY 3000
EA
DUNGEON KEEPER II
EA



REVIEWS UPDATE

ROGUE SQUADRON

INFORMATION

FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	Nintendo
DEVELOPER	LucasArts
STYLE	Shoot-'em-up
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£44.99
PLAYERS	One
RUMBLE PAK	Yes
MEMORY PAK	No
EXPANSION PAK	Optional

PC version reviewed in issue 3
SCORED: **76%**



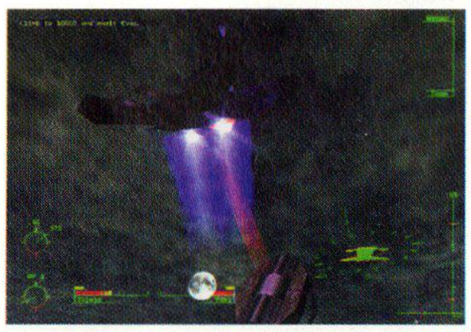
The release of the N64 version of *Rogue Squadron* was delayed from last Christmas, and it seems that it might just benefit from that delay. It was in danger of being lost in the N64's hectic Christmas schedule, but now it's just about the best thing to buy for N64 if you've already got *Zelda*. This kind of game is definitely more suited to the N64 than the PC. The arcade-style nature of the game works infinitely better on the N64 control pad – analogue stick, trigger button and all. Apart from this, *Rogue Squadron* is identical to the PC version; gameplay, graphics and sound are all intact, and you could say that N64 *Rogue Squadron* looks even better now it uses the Expansion Pak.
This is a wonderful game on the N64, only marred by the same things as the PC version; if this weren't a Star Wars game, then it wouldn't be half as good. Still, if you're a fan then you'll absolutely love it.
SCORE: **85%**

PSYGNOSIS SHAKE-UP

Liverpool based publishers close SF offices

Troubled game publishers and developers Psygnosis have closed another studio, this time in San Francisco which Total CONTROL visited just a few months ago. The move has resulted in the loss of twenty jobs, with other staff being relocated to the company's nearby Foster City offices. This follows the closure last year of their studios in Manchester here in the UK.

Psygnosis maintain that this latest setback will not affect the release of games being developed in America, such as, *Metal Fatigue*, *Hired Guns*, *Motocross Madness* and the keenly anticipated *Drakan: Order of the Flame*. However, with the veteran company in such poor shape, speculation is rife in the industry that some form of take-over deal may be on the cards before the end of this year.



SONY DOES WONDERS IN HAND-HELD MARKET

Bandai's WonderSwan gets Sony backing

This spring will see the arrival in Japan of Bandai's new hand-held console, the WonderSwan. Although official details of American and European launches have yet to be released, it seems likely that announcements will be made, especially now Bandai are rumoured to have secured Sony's backing.

The Japanese gaming press are suggesting that the Sony will be converting some of their biggest PlayStation titles across to the new machine, including *Gran Turismo*, *PaRappa the Rapper*, and *Intelligent Qube*. There are also rumours of a possible link-up connection between the WonderSwan and PlayStation, although this has yet to be confirmed.

If you can't wait for that, the NeoGeo Pocket has already hit the UK shelves. Fire International Ltd. and SNK are co-distributing the product over here. The console, priced at £49.99, currently has five titles available including *King of the Fighters*, *Samurai Spirits* and *Pocket Tennis*. Look out for our first ever NeoGeo Pocket reviews this month.

COMPETITION

WIN! TOMB RAIDER III MERCHANDISE

Thanks to Eidos, we've got over £500 worth of Tomb Raider III merchandise to give away.

1st Prize
£150 worth of *Tomb Raider III* streetwear
Lara Croft Figurine
Copy of *Tomb Raider III*

2nd Prize
£75 worth of *Tomb Raider III* streetwear
Lara Croft Figurine
Copy of *Tomb Raider III*

3rd Prize
Copies of *Tomb Raider*, *Tomb Raider II* and *Tomb Raider III*

4th Prize
100 *Tomb Raider III* key-rings and goodies

All you have to do is answer these three *Tomb Raider*-related questions:

1. What artefact was Lara Croft searching for in *Tomb Raider*?
A The Scion
B A Pylon
C That cat

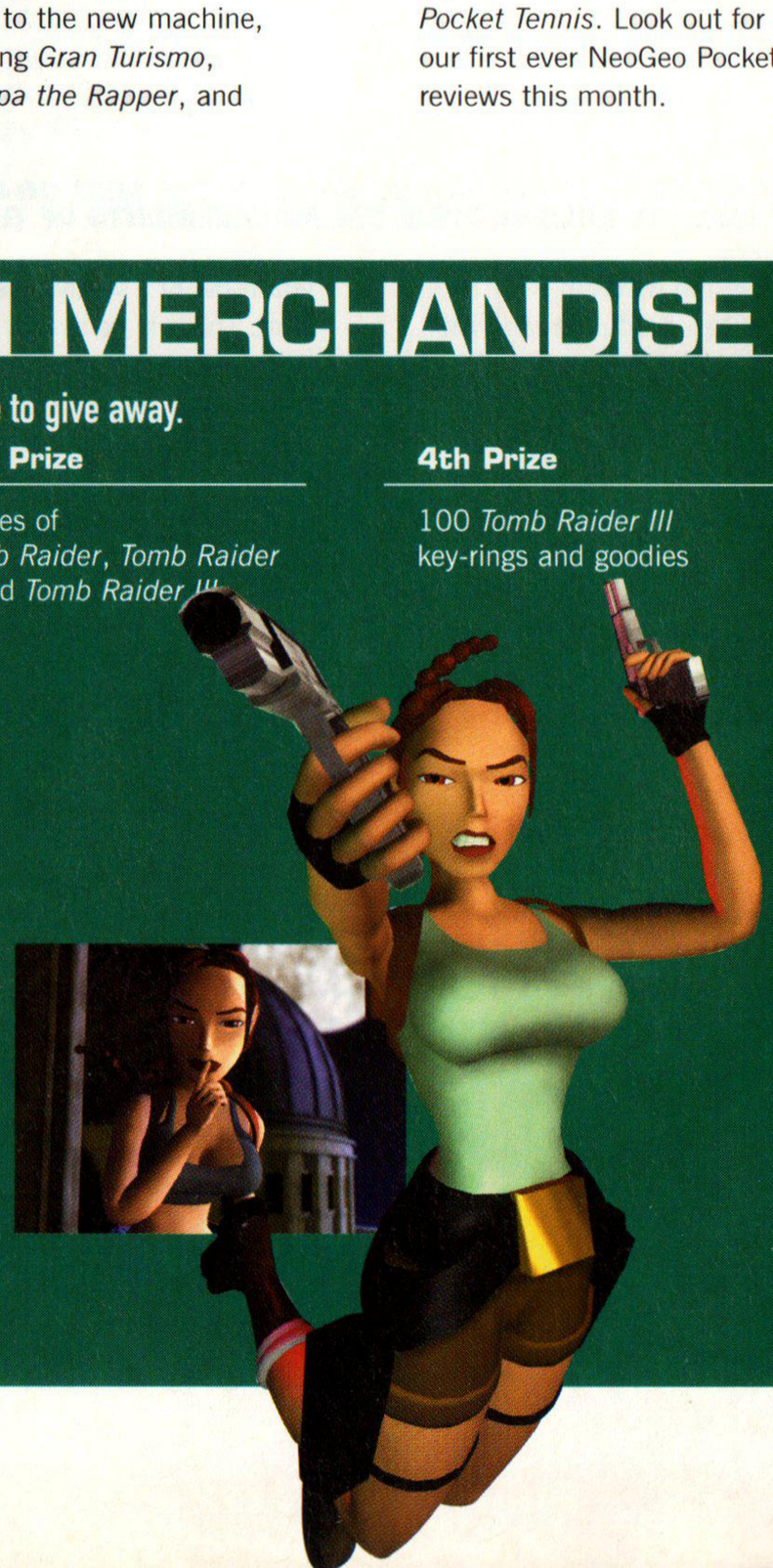
2. Which of these moves was introduced in *TRII*?
A Climbing ladders
B Eating chips
C Nc3! b5

3. Which model plays the 'real life' Lara?
A Nell McAndrew
B Andrew McNell
C SCPH-5552

Write your answers on a postcard or stuck down envelope and send them to:

• Lara, Lara, Lara! • Total CONTROL • 1 Roman Court • 48 New North Road • Exeter EX4 4EP

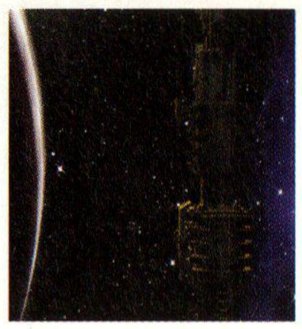
Usual rules apply and the final date for entries is 20th April 1999.



TOMORROW NEVER DIES
EA

C&C: TIBERIAN SUN
EA

ALIEN VS PREDATOR
EA



DUKE NUKEM FOREVER
GT INTERACTIVE

RAYMAN II
UBISOFT

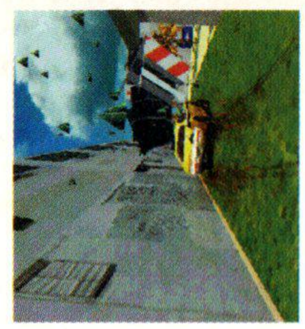
KANAAN
UBISOFT

PREMIER MANAGER '99
GREMLIN

STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS
INTERPLAY

FIGHTING STEEL
MINDSCAPE

DRIVER
REFLECTIONS



GEX 4: DEEP COVER GECKO
CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

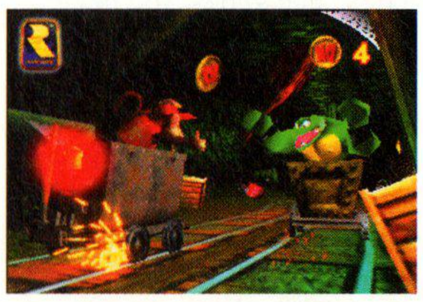
APRIL

DIABLO II
SIERRA

RARE REVEALS DONKEY KONG 64

Screenshot released of Rare's 64-bit sequel to DKC

A solitary screenshot is all that exists of Rare's follow up to the game that made their name on the SNES. As you can see, the game looks very similar to *Banjo-Kazooie*, and Rare have foregone the 2D-bitmap look of the SNES game in favour of 3D. Shown is a mine cart ride – one of the levels in the SNES game –and it is likely to feature many of the gameplay ideas seen in *Donkey Kong Country*. We'll keep you informed on this exciting title.



1998: THE BEST-SELLERS

PlayStation games outsell everything in the European market

Figures from ChartTrack and Gfk have arrived in the Total CONTROL office that confirm that the PlayStation's dominance in the UK has been reflected in Europe over the last twelve months. *Gran Turismo* is by far and away the leader with more than 700,000 units sold over all territories. World Cup '98 was second with a few thousand less than *GT* on both PC and PlayStation. Third was *Tomb Raider II*, which sold over half-a-million copies. However, the top Nintendo titles are not too far behind with *Goldeneye*, *Diddy Kong Racing*, *Super Mario 64* and *Banjo-Kazooie* selling over quarter-of-a-million units each.

PC	Units Sold	Total Revenue
Tomb Raider II	242,000	£7.62M
World Cup '98	241,000	£6.8M
Anno 1602	232,700	£6.3M
Age of Empires	200,900	£6.9M
Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines	198,500	£6.4M
Nintendo 64		
Goldeneye 007	233,500	£11M
Diddy Kong Racing	215,300	£8.9M
Super Mario 64	213,700	£8.7M
Banjo-Kazooie	211,000	£9M
Yoshi's Story	153,500	£6M
PlayStation		
Gran Turismo	733,000	£30M
World Cup '98	390,000	£14M
Resident Evil	369,500	£16M
FIFA: Road to the World Cup	333,600	£12.5M
Tomb Raider II	322,900	£10.5M

Sales taken from Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Holland, England and Eire. Period: January to September 1998 cumulated.

QUAKE III ARENA EXPANDS

id's sequel set for Apple-Macintosh

Apple have revealed that the (need we say this?) highly anticipated *Quake III: Arena* will be appearing on Macintosh. The game will be released to coincide with the launch of the company's new G3 line, only a short time after the PC's release date, the spring of 1999. "*Quake III: Arena* will set new standards for graphics, networking and gameplay, and the new Macs will be among the best platforms to experience it on," said John Carmack at id Software. "Apple is making all the right moves on both the hardware and software sides to make the Macintosh a great platform for games."

The screenshots shown are actual Mac grabs and look almost identical to the PC version. How has this been achieved? Well, the new Power Mac G3 series, to be released soon, include ATI Rage 128 graphics accelerators on the motherboard and a new OS that includes Open GL will go a long way to emulating PC graphics cards. Apparently, the code need to convert the PC code for Mac is only 15K in size, so you can expect the game to be identical. Quake III will be released for Mac shortly after the PC version in the summer.

Will this herald in a new dawn of Mac gaming? With the I-Mac series outselling any PC in North America last year, it seems that it just might...







Above: The new PowerMac G3 is not only stylish but has support from a number of large game companies including id Software

NEW FFVIII DETAILS

Square have revealed a few more titbits of information concerning the forthcoming *Final Fantasy* game. The game will feature a sub-game where players take part in a 'Card Battle'. The game can only be played in towns and cities and sounds similar to Top Trumps. In other words, players have a deck of cards each, and the winning card is the one with the highest face value. It is still unknown what effect this will have on the bigger picture of the main game, but if it is anything like Chocobo racing, then it is sure to play a significant part.

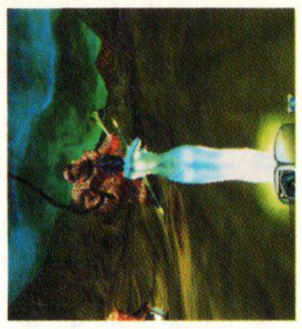
KONAMI DREAMCAST XXL

The Japanese software giants have confirmed that two of their best-selling PlayStation and N64 titles will appear on Dreamcast later this year. Versions of *International Superstar Soccer* and *Track & Field* are already in development and should be out in time for the European launch of Sega's console in September.

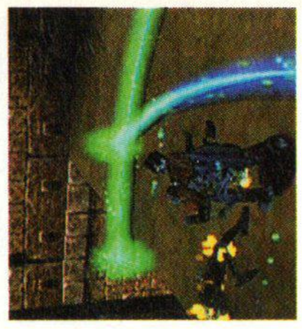
IT'S WAR FOR HUDSON

Japanese software firm, Hudsonsoft, have announced a new N64 title that utilises the 64 Game Boy Pak. The device, which slots into the space for a memory card, allows data to be transferred from a Game Boy cartridge to the N64 – the only other title so far to use the device is *Pokémon Stadium*. *64 Wars* is a turn-based strategy board game and features a map edit mode. There are no plans to release the game in the US or Europe as yet.

AGE OF EMPIRES II
MICROSOFT
CUT-THROATS
EIDOS
SABOTEUR
EIDOS
UPRISING 2
UBISOFT
SHADOWMAN
ACCLAIM
MESSIAH
INTERPLAY
GIANTS
INTERPLAY



SU27 FLANKER 2.0
MINDSCAPE
LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER
CRYSTAL DYNAMICS



JUNE
F1GPIII
MICROPROSE

INDUSTRY LEGENDS

YU SUZUKI

This month we profile Sega's arcade supremo

Who does he work for?
Sega Enterprises Ltd. in Japan. Or, more accurately, Yu Suzuki is head of Sega's AM2 division, responsible for arcade games.
What makes him a legend?

More than a decade in the industry, Suzuki has been responsible for many of Sega's greatest arcade games: *Out Run*, *Space Harrier*, *Power Drift*, *Daytona USA*, and the *Virtua Fighter* series, to name but a few.

What's he doing now?

Apart from overseeing the conversion of many of AM2's games to Dreamcast, Suzuki is working on Sega's latest experiment in video games – *Shenmue*. This game was covered extensively last issue and could be one of the most radical games ever made. It is best described as a cinematic RPG, but Sega say that we will need a new category to put it in. It features a 'living digital world' which is affected by both the passing of time and weather. Suzuki also boasts that the game will be completely open ended, allowing players to do exactly what they want to do.

And what will he be doing in the future?

Carrying on the great work at AM2 with *Daytona USA 2*, *Virtua Fighter 4* and others. Depending on whether *Shenmue* is a success (we expect it to be huge), more experimental projects for Dreamcast are promised.



Selected Gameography

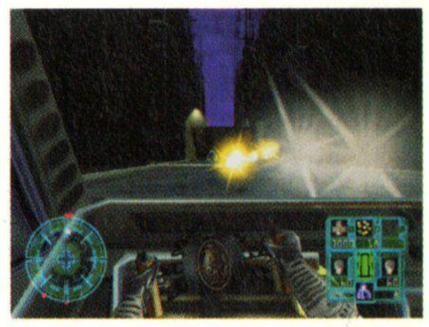
Hang On	1984
Space Harrier	1985
Out Run	1986
After Burner	1987
Power Drift	1989
G-LOC	1990
Virtua Racing	1992
Virtua Fighter	1993
Virtua Fighter 2	1994
Virtua Fighter 3	1996

EA RESPONSIBLE FOR RED RUM

Combination of Quake and Carmageddon in new PC title, Redline

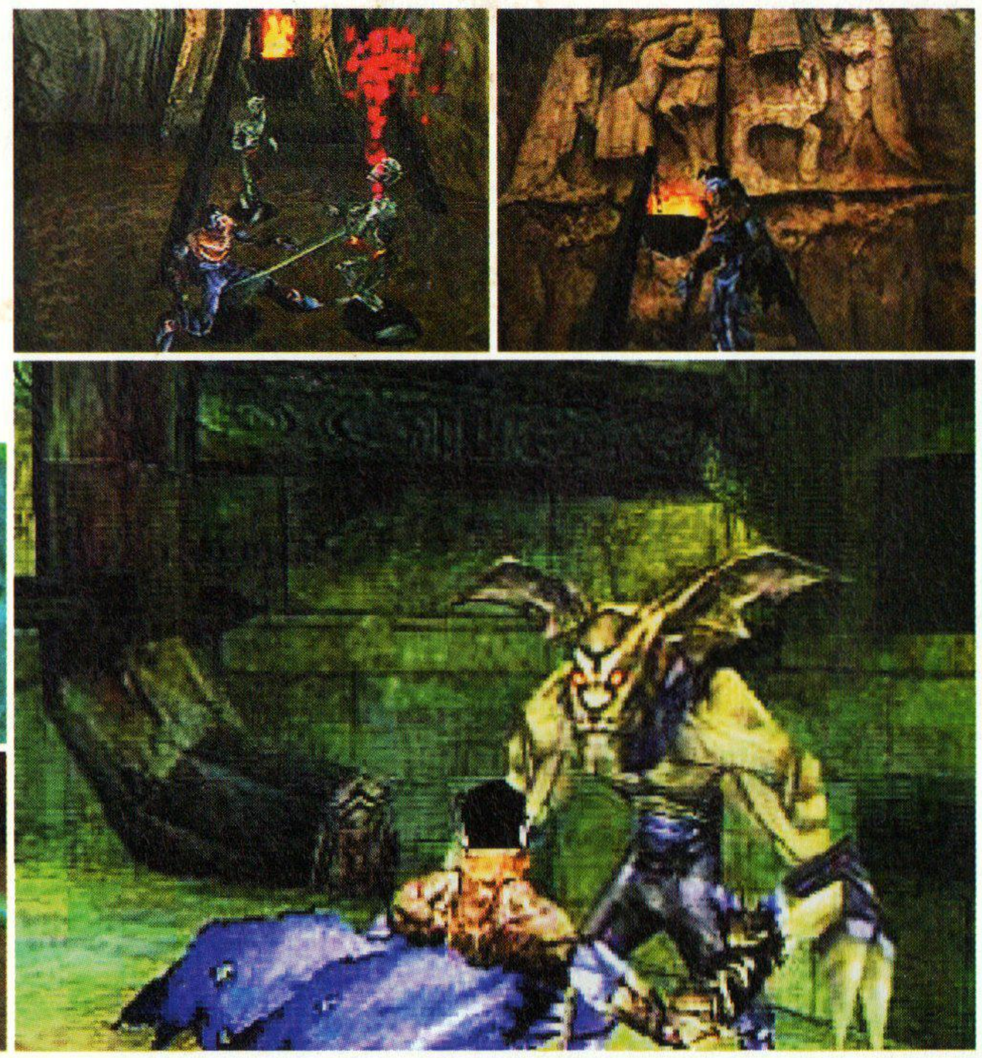
Redline is set in a dystopian future where gang warfare has spiralled out of control. As an aspiring member of one of the smaller gangs, you must rise through the ranks and eventually rule the city. The game is essentially a mix of both *Carmageddon II* and *Quake II* – it's played on both foot and in vehicle, with you having to use both to progress through each level. It sounds a bit like a first-person *GTA*, which can't be a bad idea. There are more than 20 unique and fully customisable vehicles to use and twelve missions to conquer. Perhaps the most exciting inclusion would be the 16-player LAN or Internet option, which looks like it could be quite special.

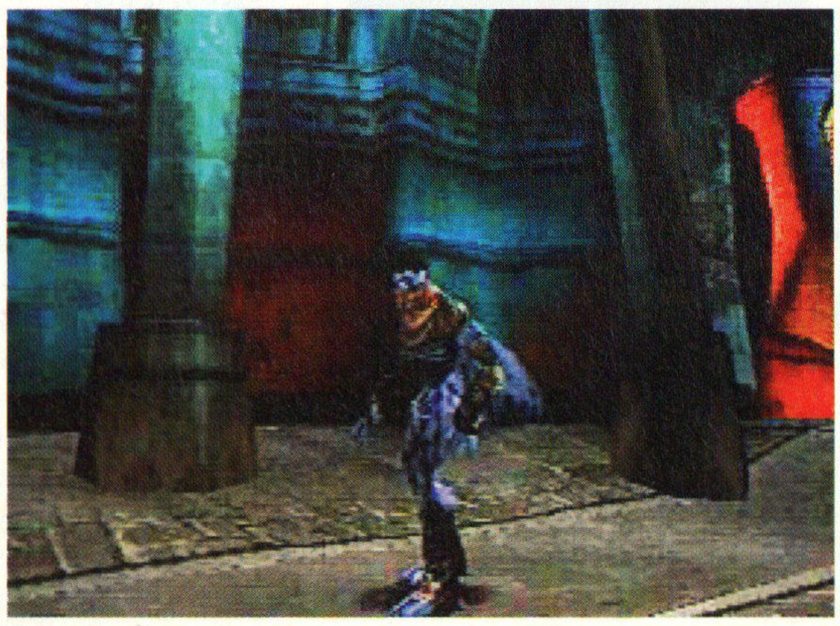
The graphics engine may not live up to many of the other first-person games in development such as *Quake III* or *Kingpin*, but there are some impressive effects on show. *Redline* is being developed by Accolade and will be published by EA.

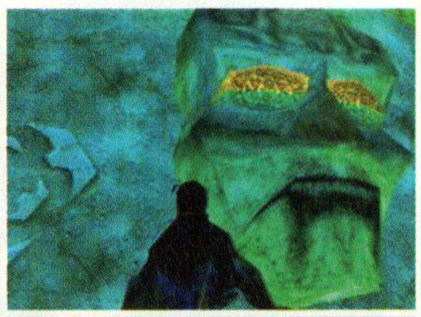


UPDATE: SOUL REAVER

Eidos' newly acquired *Soul Reaver* is shaping up very nicely. We covered the game extensively in issue 2, but since then work in the level design has begun in earnest. As these new screenshots show, the game is proving to be extremely varied in its settings – cathedrals and volcanic areas in particular look excellent. In case you don't know about the game, *Soul Reaver* is the sequel to *Legacy of Kain*, and the player takes control of the evil Reizel in a battle against the even more evil Kain from the first game. The game is basically a 3D platformer but features plenty of puzzles, and you will also be able to enter a spirit world. *Soul Reaver* is due for release in the spring on PlayStation.









SEVEN KINGDOMS II INTERACTIVE MAGIC
ANACHRONOX EIDOS
X-WING: ALLIANCE ACTIVISION
EARTHWORM JIM 3D INTERPLAY
NOCTURNE TAKE 2

JULY
QUAKE III: ARENA ACTIVISION
KINGPIN INTERPLAY
GRAND THEFT AUTO LONDON TAKE 2

AUGUST
OMIKRON EIDOS
BATTLEZONE 2 ACTIVISION

SEPTEMBER
INDIANA JONES ACTIVISION
PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D RED ORB

OCTOBER
CREATURES III MINDSCAPE
GTA 2 TAKE 2

DECEMBER
FORCE COMMANDER ACTIVISION
GALLEON INTERPLAY

GO HALF-LIFE MAD!

Valve release major Half-Life updates

If you've sampled the delights of the *Half-Life* multiplayer game (as we do every day), then you'll be pleased to know that there are two new patches available from Valve. The first simply improves the game's speed and adds a teamplay option to the game. You'll also get two specially designed teamplay maps – one of which includes an airstrike option. To download this patch all you have to do is go to the update option in your *Half-Life* game. "We are very committed to supporting the *Half-Life* multiplayer community and will continue to invest in further enhancing this aspect of our technology and gameplay," said Valve boss, Gabe Newell. "We've come up with a number of techniques for encoding the multiplayer datastream that significantly improve overall latency on lower speed connections," Valve's Yahn Bernier continued. "Most players will see a dramatic improvement in the smoothness of gameplay."

The other great news is that Valve have also released their original *Quake Team Fortress* patch, updated for use with *Half-Life*. It's been released to whet people's appetites for *Team Fortress 2*, a stand-alone title that uses the *Half-Life* engine.

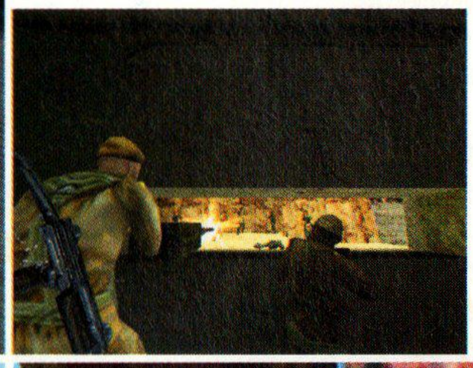
Team Fortress 2, on the other hand, features missions such as capture the flag, spy scenarios and more complex missions, closer to real-time strategy than a first-person shooter. There are nine classes of soldier to choose from – Commander, Light Infantry, Field Medic, Heavy Infantry, Rocket Infantry, Sniper, Commando, Spy and Engineer. Each has his own strengths and weaknesses and are designed to suit different types of *Half-Life* players. The game also features twenty missions, a dozen weapons, team bots (allowing you to take on a team of computer controlled soldiers) and a variety of vehicles including tanks, helicopters and armoured personnel carriers.

"We wanted to introduce *Team Fortress* gameplay to the *Half-Life* community and give current *Team Fortress* players a glimpse of some of the new technology we'll be using in *Team Fortress 2*," said Robin Walker, lead designer for *Team Fortress 2*. "We were able to take the original *Team Fortress* add-on for *Quake* and port it to *Half-Life* as a way of testing the *Half-Life* software dev kit. Team Fortress Classic players can now enjoy *Half-Life*'s superior graphics and audio, ease of use, and advanced animation technology while we focus on making *Team Fortress 2* the best multiplayer game possible."

And as if that's not enough, Valve are also releasing the *Half-Life* software development kit. You can visit http://www.planethalflife.com/wavelength/tclist.htm for more details. "We have had several of the development teams here to our offices in Washington to try out early versions of the development kit," said Valve's Harry Teasley. "It's very exciting to see just how far both single-player and multiplayer products are building on the *Half-Life* technology."

Can *Half-Life* ever expect to outdo id's *Quake II*? It looks like these mods may well go a long way to do just that.









THIRD GENERATION PENTIUM

Intel have confirmed that its upcoming Katmai processor will be officially titled Pentium III. It will be released in the States sometime in March and in the UK shortly afterwards. The chip will feature sixty new instructions to help accelerate 3D graphics, audio and video. The chip will initially be launched in 450Mhz and 500Mhz variations.

FFVIII HYSTERIA MOUNTS

Stores all across Japan have begun to take pre-orders for Square's latest RPG epic, *Final Fantasy VIII*. The company's convenience store, Digicube, expects to take over 1.5 million pre-orders for the game, which will break current records.

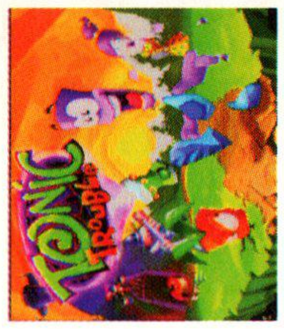








MARCH
RAT ATTACK
MINDSCAPE
SURVIVOR: DAY ONE
KONAMI
NBA IN THE ZONE '99
KONAMI SPORTS
O.D.T.
PSYGNOSIS
VIGILANTE 8
ACTIVISION
RAMPAGE: UNIVERSAL TOUR
MIDWAY
TONIC TROUBLE
UBI SOFT



MICRO MACHINES 64
CODEMASTERS
HYBRID HEAVEN
KONAMI
MONACO GRAND PRIX
UBI SOFT

APRIL
SHADOW MAN
ACCLAIM
4X4 MUD
MONSTERS
TAKE 2/GOD



HOT SWEATY SQUADDIES

Eidos prepare for their Commandos follow-up

Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines, from Pyro Studios, reached the top slot in the PC Charts after its release during summer last year. Now the final touches are being applied to its successor, *Commandos: Beyond the Call of Duty*.

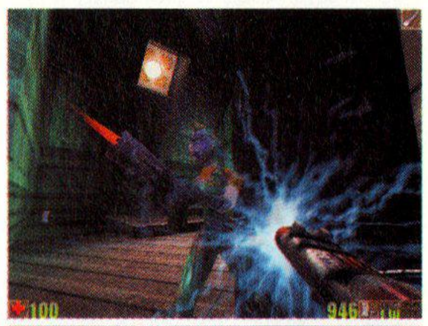
The new game will not be the rumoured sequel that many have been hoping for. Instead it's more of a mission pack, although you will not need the first game to play it. The standalone title boasts eight brand new levels, some of which will be up to twice the size of those in the first game. The resolution has also been increased so the maps now look even better than before. The new game keeps with the WW2 setting, but this time the action takes place around Eastern Europe and Greece rather than Western Europe and Africa as before. While all of the characters from the original will return with no new faces, they'll now be able to use the BAR and M1 Rifle weapons. Other items include rocks, cigarette traps and handcuffs. The original was criticised for the temperamental AI and excessive loading times, but both of these features are also undergoing improvements.

Commandos: Beyond the Call of Duty is likely to arrive this spring and will be published by Eidos.

UNREAL FOR PLAYSTATION?

GT Interactive announce PC hit for Sony's console

It seems highly likely that *Unreal* will be making the transition from PC to PlayStation in the near future. What form the notoriously power-hungry game will take is still unclear, but we expect most of the gameplay and AI to remain intact in the conversion. "We've been talking about it for a while now," said a spokesperson for the publisher. "We had to ascertain if it was possible or not. It is, so it's going ahead. It will definitely be released this year, but we have no specifics on the conversion as yet." With *Quake II* soon to be appearing on the console, it seems that the contest for the best first-person shooter on the PlayStation has begun in earnest.





UPDATE: COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN

C&C was the game that threw the real-time strategy genre into the spotlight, spawning hundreds of copies; the term '*C&C* clone' has been used frequently in every magazine for the last few years. The original plan was to create an epic trilogy of games with an ongoing storyline between them, but *C&C: Red Alert* was an unplanned addition to the series. *Tiberian Sun* is set after the first game and follows the exploits of both the brotherhood of NOD and the GDI. The plot is being kept under wraps but Kane, the twisted leader of the brotherhood of NOD, returns in the game.

Several of the clones have attempted to better the original by throwing in more units and maps, but Westwood are keen to avoid having too many units that will not be used. Instead they are focusing on a smaller number, but a higher quality. Every unit will have an Achilles' heel, being vulnerable to either another specific unit or terrain. One of the new features involves unit experience – veteran units will receive improved abilities determined by the number and type of kills they have made. For instance, an infantry unit destroying a tank will gain more than if it had been the other way around.

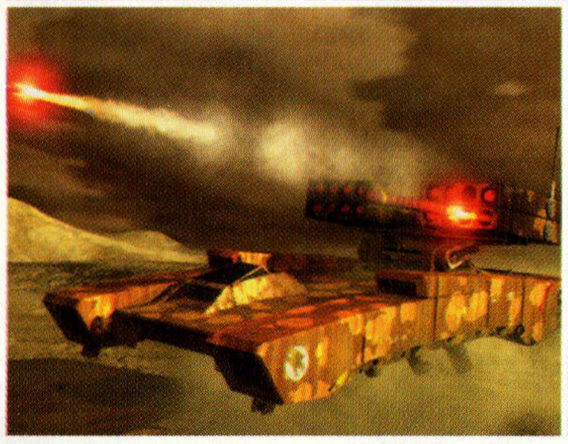
The AI is promised to be highly advanced and adaptive to the player's attacks – guerrilla warfare and sabotage will also become more important. Defences can be customised and upgraded, lakes and rivers can freeze over, forest fires can open up new terrain etc. The detail is incredible.

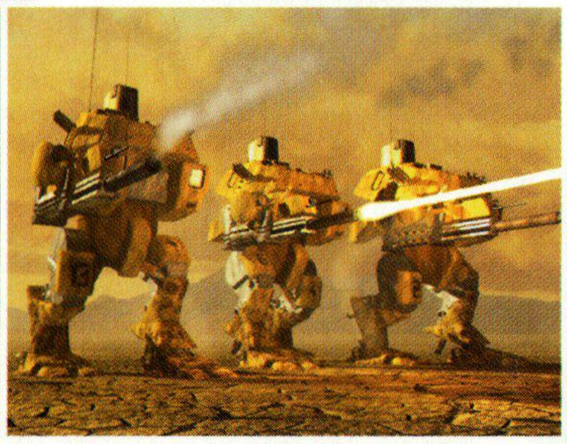
Graphically it looks superb, Westwood have steered away from using polygonal effects and are using a new voxel engine, which is effectively modelling units with three dimensional pixels. It looks superb, and you can expect the cut scenes (featuring James Earl Jones and Michael Biehn) to be of a similar quality.

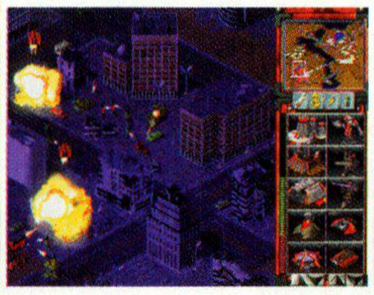
Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun will be published by EA, and if the release date stands, it will be on shelves this spring.



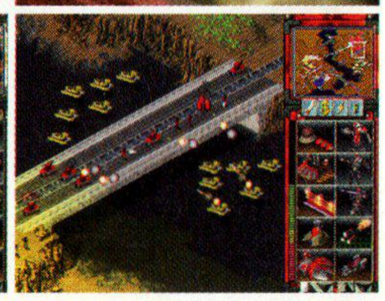


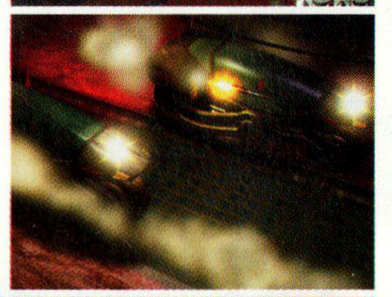














ROADSTERS '99
TITUS

SNOWBOARD KIDS 2
ATLUS SOFTWARE

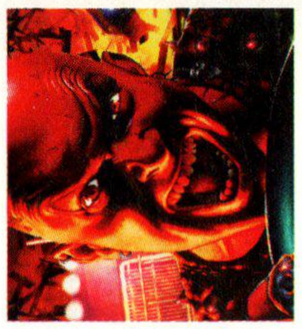
MICHAEL OWEN'S WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER '99
EIDOS SPORTS

MAY

STAR WARS: POD RACER
NINTENDO

RAYMAN 2: THE GREAT ESCAPE
UBI SOFT

CARMAGEDDON 64
INTERPLAY SPORTS



WILD METAL COUNTRY
GREMLIN

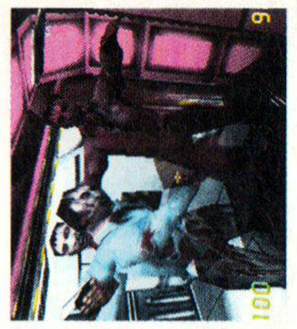
NEED FOR SPEED 64
ELECTRONIC ARTS

RUGRATS BOARD GAME
THQ

JUNGLE BOTS
TITUS

ALL-STAR TENNIS '99
UBI SOFT SPORTS

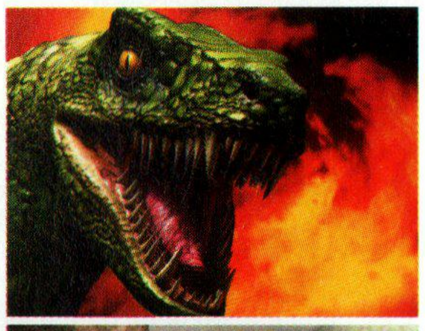
DUKE NUKEM: ZERO HOUR
GT INTERACTIVE

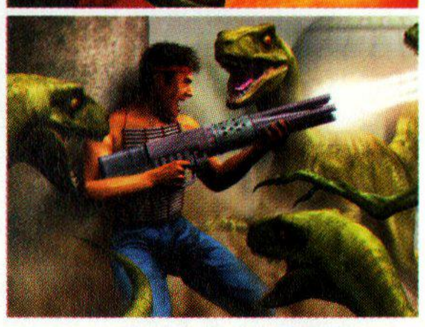


TUROK'S SEEDS GROW

Acclaim announce sequel to successful first-person shooter

Acclaim have officially announced that there will be sequel to the highly acclaimed *Turok 2*. The game should be out in time for next Christmas, but may be released in the New Year. No further details have been revealed, but the *Turok 2* project manager let slip some of the game's plot in a previous interview. In reference to an alien race he is quoted as saying, "...and at the end of the game it [The Oblivion's presence] remains unsolved. Hint, hint, could this foreshadow anything? (Hint, hint). It might (hint hint). But I can't comment (hint hint). So we kind of left a little bit of a cliffhanger there, and if we decide to pursue *Turok 3* it will certainly involve elements from *Turok 2* to a much larger degree." If *Turok 3* is to make its projected release date, then it is likely to utilise an upgraded version of the *Turok 2* game engine instead of a brand new one. We'll bring more news on *Turok 3* as and when we get it.



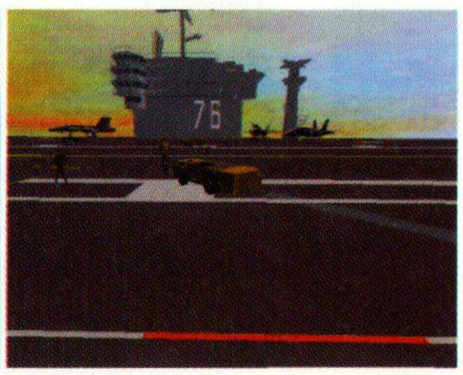


HORNET SET TO STUN

PC F/A-18E Super Hornet gets revamped for '99

To mirror the real life improvements that have been made to the plane, Digital Integration are set to release a revamped version of *F/A-18E Super Hornet*. Some of the improvements include an advanced graphics engine with more detailed low-level flying and cloud texturing, a fully interactive cockpit, smarter weaponry, and dynamic campaign models. *F/A-18E Super Hornet* from Digital Integration is due for an imminent release.





REPORTAGE

CAUGHT IN THE WEB

Our monthly look into the wonderful world of the Internet

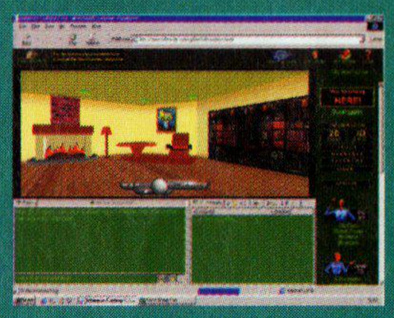
GAMECENTER

C/NET's Gamecenter is one of the best on-line resources for information about computer gaming. With news, previews, cheats and demos, it's almost as cool as Total CONTROL. The site is updated daily, and carries links to dozens of other sites. Find it at www.gamecenter.com



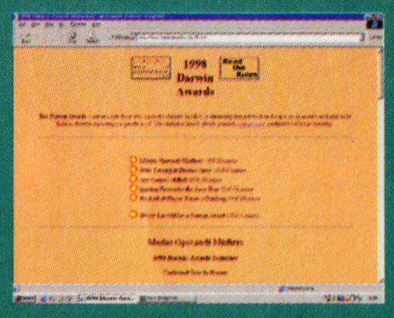
COLONY CITY

Blaxxun Interactive run an innovative on-line community which allows you to become a resident, build your own virtual house, and meet with others using a 3D 'avatar'. Get a virtual job, buy virtual furniture, and make virtual friends. It's the wave of the future. Immigrate on www.colonycity.com



DARWIN AWARDS

Although not one of the best looking sites on the Web, it's a perennial favourite. Read about some refreshingly stupid people. My personal favourite is the 1997 Honourable Mention, The Unfortunate Husband. Read all about it on www.darwinawards.com



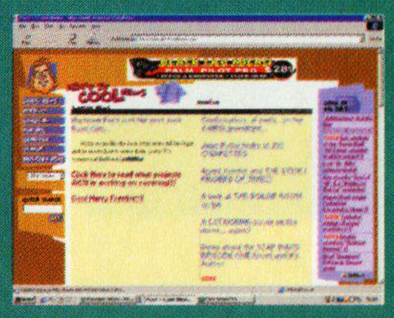
THE RASPBERRY REALM

The official homepage of Ultimate PC's reviews editor Miles Guttery, our beloved friend and mentor. Much japery related to the corporal punishment of monkeys, and some polar bears. Nice. Meet up with this human dynamo on www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Chamber/6178/



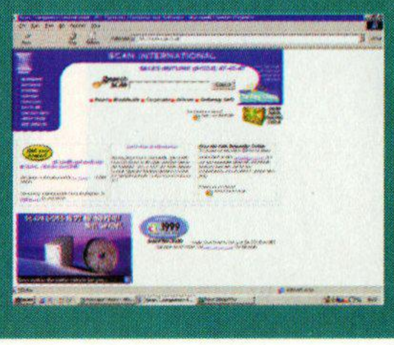
AIN'T IT COOL NEWS

This is the site you need if you want the latest breaking news from the world of TV and movies. Many Hollywood insiders contribute, and they have broken some hot stories, including sneak previews of the new Star Wars movie. Lights, camera and www.aint-it-cool-news.com



SCAN INTERNATIONAL

If you are a PC owner, you'll inevitably need to upgrade your system at some point. When you do, check out Scan's Website for some unbelievable bargains on computer components, everything from memory to monitors at knock-down prices. Find them at www.scan.co.uk



FITS LIKE A GLOVE

Atari Games' forthcoming *Gauntlet Legends* will use will use the N64's memory pak in a new way. Players will be able to take characters from one game and take them into a friend's game. Here they will be able to join an existing party and continue the game.

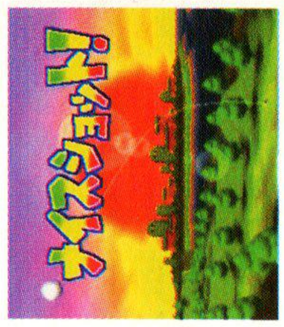
YOU CAN KILL KENNY AGAIN

Acclaim have announced that they fully intend to develop a sequel to the successful *South Park* game. No details of the game have been released as yet, but Iguana will not be developing it – *Turok 3* is their main concern for now.

LARA: BATTING FOR THE OTHER TEAM?

Sources from Core have stated that the team behind the original *Tomb Raider* game are now working on an entirely new project. Although they have plans for another third-person title in the future, they are at present directing their attention towards an as-yet-unannounced project. A spokesperson for the company explained the current Lara situation: "More *Tomb Raider* games are in the pipeline, all being written at Core, but none of the original team members are working on them anymore." More news as we get it.

SUMMER '99
HARRIER 2001 VIDEO SYSTEM
CHARLIE BLAST'S TERRITORY KEMCO
ASSAULT TELSTAR
RE-VOLT ACCLAIM
MYSTICAL NINJA: GOEMON 2 KONAMI
JEST INFOGRAMES
EARTHWORM JIM 3D INTERPLAY
HYPE – A TIME QUEST UBI SOFT
NINTENDO ALL-STAR DAI-RANTOU SMASH BROTHERS NINTENDO
WWF ATTITUDE



ACCLAIM SPORTS
RONALDO SOCCER INFOGRAMES SPORTS
CALIFORNIA SPEED MIDWAY
BLUES BROTHERS 2000 TITUS

CHARTS
ALL FORMATS

Produced in association with ELSPA

1 FIFA '99 — Electronic Arts — PlayStation



Club sides replace International teams in Electronic Arts' FIFA 'update' for 1999. SCORE 76%

2 Tomb Raider III — Eidos — PlayStation/PC



A new wardrobe for Lara and smoking guns have made this a must buy. SCORE 75%

3 Crash Bandicoot 3 — SCEE — PlayStation



Fans of box-smashing and scrumping are going mad for Sony's latest Bandicoot sim. SCORE 70%

4 Turok 2 — Acclaim — N64



Turok is now officially a license to print money. Any bets against Turok 4? SCORE 87%

5 TOCA Touring Car — Codemasters — PlayStation/PC



Outselling its own sequel, and still one of the better driving games available. SCORE N/A

6	Grand Theft Auto	Take 2 Interactive	PlayStation/PC	SCORE 89%
7	V-Rally	Infogrames	PlayStation	SCORE 78%
8	Brian Lara Cricket	Codemasters	PlayStation	SCORE 78%
9	Colin McRae Rally	Codemasters	PlayStation	SCORE N/A
10	Crash Bandicoot	Sony/Platinum	PlayStation	SCORE 74%
11	Rayman	Ubisoft/Platinum	PlayStation	SCORE N/A
12	Mickey's Wild Adventure	Virgin/Platinum	PlayStation	SCORE N/A
13	Resident Evil	Virgin/Platinum	PlayStation	SCORE N/A
14	Baldur's Gate	Interplay	PC	SCORE N/A
15	Worms	Team 17	PlayStation	SCORE 71%
16	Die Hard Trilogy	Fox Interactive	PlayStation	SCORE 70%
17	Abe's Exoddus	GT Interactive	PlayStation/PC	SCORE 89%
18	Gran Tourismo	Sony	PlayStation	SCORE N/A
19	Tekken 2	Sony/Platinum	PlayStation	SCORE N/A
20	Spyro The Dragon	Sony	PlayStation	SCORE 79%

PC CD-ROM

1	Baldur's Gate	Interplay
2	Tomb Raider III	Eidos
3	Half-Life	Sierra
4	FIFA '99	Electronic Arts
5	Combat Flight Simulator	Microsoft

PLAYSTATION

1	FIFA '99	Electronic Arts
2	Crash Bandicoot 3	Sony
3	Tomb Raider III	Eidos
4	Brian Lara Cricket	Codemasters
5	Gran Turismo	Sony

NINTENDO 64

1	Turok 2	Acclaim
2	1080° Snowboarding	Nintendo
3	V-Rally '99	Infogrames
4	Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo
5	F1 World Grand Prix	Nintendo

CONSOLE

1	FIFA '99	Electronic Arts
2	Crash Bandicoot 3	Sony
3	Turok 2	Acclaim
4	Tomb Raider II	Eidos
5	Brian Lara Cricket	Codemasters

BUDGET PC CD-ROM

1	Tomb Raider: Unfinished Business	Eidos
2	Rally Championship	Europress
3	Worms	Team 17
4	Theme Park	EA Classics
5	Formula 1 Grand Prix 2	Microprose

BUDGET CONSOLE

1	TOCA Touring Car	Codemasters
2	Grand Theft Auto	Take 2 Interactive
3	Crash Bandicoot	Sony
4	Rayman	Ubisoft
5	Mickey's Wild Adventure	Virgin

TASMANIAN EXPRESS INFOGRAMES
JET FORCE GEMINI RARE
ARMY MEN 3D 3DO

SEPTEMBER
NFL BLITZ 99 MIDWAY
ROAD RASH 64 THQ
MONTEZUMA'S RETURN TBA
WCW 99 EA SPORTS
HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS TITUS
DUCK DODGERS IN THE 3RD 1/2 DEMENTIA INFOGRAMES

OCTOBER
DETHKARZ INFOGRAMES
MAGICAL TETRIS CHALLENGE CAPCOM
LEGO RACERS LEGO MEDIA
BANJO-TOOIE NINTENDO

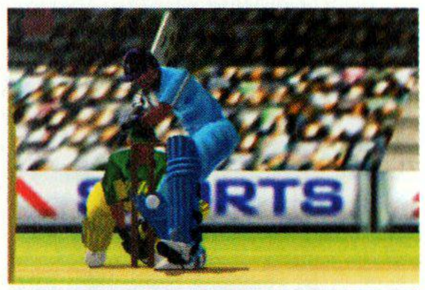
WINTER 1999
COMMAND AND CONQUER ELECTRONIC ARTS
DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 64 NINTENDO
LAST LEGION UX HUDSON SOFT
STARCRAFT

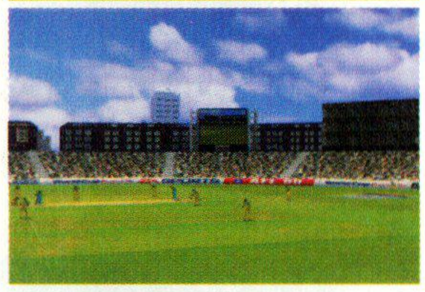
CAUGHT OUT BY EA

Cricket World Cup '99 brought to PC by EA Sports

This summer will see the next cricket World Cup, and it'll come as no surprise to learn that EA have already secured an exclusive licence. The six week tournament will consist of 42 matches between the world's twelve biggest cricket nations. English internationals Adam and Ben Hollioake participated in the motion capturing of the 600 available moves, all of which look superb and have been brilliantly recreated using 3D acceleration. Michael de Plater, producer of the game, said: "We have spent a great deal of pre-production time focusing on the interface of the game. A first time player should be able to pick up the game and intuitively have a good sense of what they need to do, while at the same time a master gamer is going to have complete control over every aspect of play".

Cricket World Cup '99 will also have fourteen-player Internet support and is scheduled for a spring release.





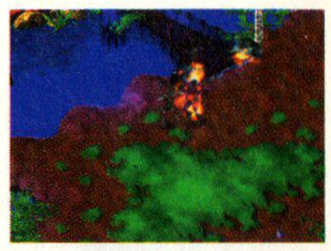
REVENANT IN THE SHADOWS

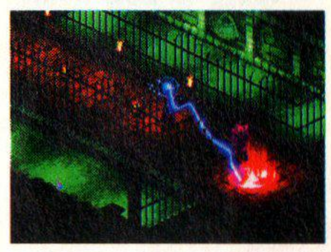
Eidos's new fantasy RPG heading for March release

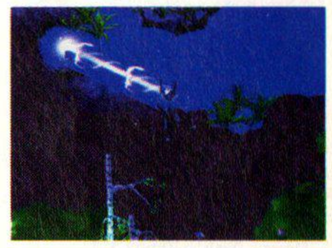
Revenant is the new upcoming fantasy RPG from Eidos. The game pits you as an enchanted human with dark supernatural powers. After your master is killed you must attempt to free yourself from the controlling nature of the gods and find your place amongst the population. The game looks very nice, with some spectacular battle magic effects and light sourcing. All of the characters have been based on the work of Canadian artist Den Beauvais, also known for his work on the Alien 4 movie, and all look very impressive. The RPG will be completely non-linear, and a lot of work has been put into creating a flexible storyline to accompany the game. It looks like *Revenant* could be a big success after its March release.













CAPTION COMPETITION

Make us laugh and win a year's subscription to Total CONTROL! All you have to do is get a bit creative and send in a screenshot with a humourous/bizarre/ironic/stupid caption attached to it. Obviously it's fairly easy if you have a PC (most games have an option to screenshot) – just print it out or e-mail it to us. If you're a console owner then you can just write a caption to a screenshot we provide. This month it's *Sonic Adventure*.



Insert caption here _____



SCIENTIST: DANNY GLOVER GOT OUT OF THE SAME PREDICAMENT IN LETHAL WEAPON RIGHT?
GORDON: YOU MEAN THE BOMB ON THE TOILET SCENE?
SCIENTIST: YEH.
GORDON: WELL, THAT WAS 1 BOMB SO JUST DON"T MOVE.....TALK.....OR BREATHE, OK?

This Months Winner: Jason Larn - London

ACCLAIM REPORT PROFITS

The first fiscal quarter of '99 ended well for Acclaim with reported net revenues of $104.8 million. This is an increase of 14% over the same period last year. This figure means that Acclaim's net earnings were $10.3 million for that period, an increase compared to last year's $8 million. "We are pleased with the results of the first fiscal quarter of '99," said Acclaim boss Gregory Fischbach. "The continued strength of our sports branded product was largely responsible for our profitability in the quarter. We look forward to growing our overall market share in calendar '99 with the continued support of our key sports brands, *All-Star Baseball*, *NFL Quarterback Club*, *Jeremy McGrath's Supercross*, *WWF* and *NBA Jam*."

WHO IS THE BIGGEST OF THEM ALL?

GT Interactive has announced that they have acquired UK software company, Reflections. The company are best known for their *Destruction Derby* games, published by Psygnosis, but their latest project is likely to do a lot better. *Driver* is the name of their latest attempt to re-invent the driving game. It is loosely based on sixties American cop movies and will be published by GT on PlayStation and PC in the spring.

Harry Rubin from GTI explained the rationale behind the transaction, stating: "As we continue to grow our international market share, developers like Reflections – which can design products specifically for Europe as well as those with broader global appeal – become vital to our success."

KLINGON ACADEMY

Interplay's Star Trek adventure prepares to decloak

Due for release in the next couple of months, *Klingon Academy* from Interplay promises to be one of the most spectacular space combat simulators ever made.

Chronologically, the game is set some time before the sixth Star Trek film, The Undiscovered Country, and features appearances from Christopher Plummer as the fearsome General Chang, and David Warner as Chancellor Gorkon, leader of the Klingon Empire. You play the role of Torlek, a candidate for the Klingon Defence Force's prestigious Elite Command Academy. Guided by Chang, you will learn the tactics of starship combat and the code of honour which is so important to the Klingon race. In the Academy simulators you will learn to command three different Klingon ships, and your training includes a simulated engagement with the Enterprise herself, under the command of James T. Kirk.

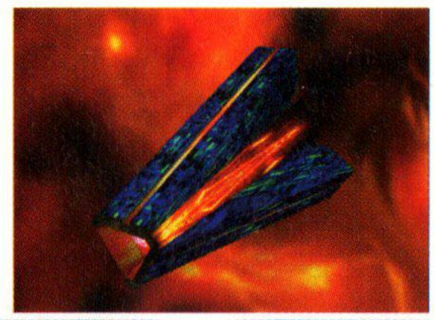
When your training is over, you spend a brief period working as a spy for General Chang before taking command of your own ship in a full-scale war. You will have the opportunity to work your way up to the command of the kilometre-long Accuser Class Dreadnought.

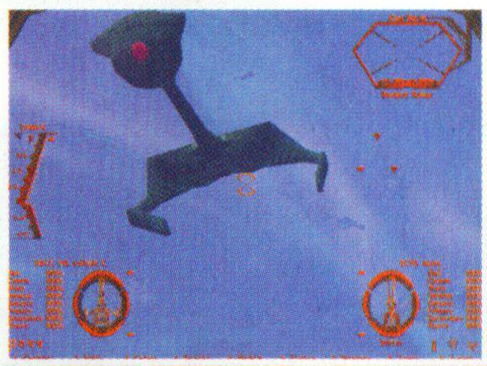
There are over fifty different starships in the game, modelled with such detail that if you blast a chunk out of the hull of one of them, you will be able to see individual decks! The ships are from six different races, including the Federation, the Romulans, the Tholians, the Gorn Alliance and the Sha'kurians, a new race introduced for the game. You will interact with them over the course of thirty complex missions where you command every aspect of starship operations. From your captain's chair, you oversee the actions of your bridge officers, but you can take over the gunnery position if you wish to have the honour of the kill for yourself.

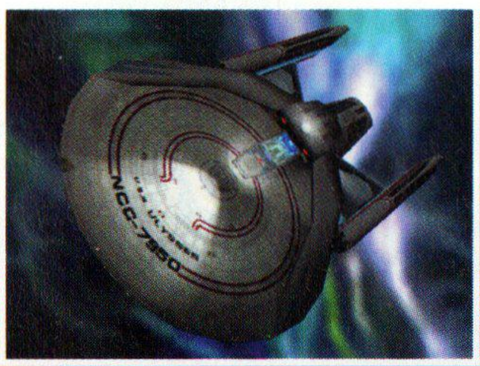
All the familiar Star Trek technology is replicated in the game, including shields, tractor beams, transporters and the famous Klingon cloaking device. You can drop your cloak, cripple the enemy by knocking out their shields, then beam over up to a thousand troops to capture their ship in hand-to-hand combat.

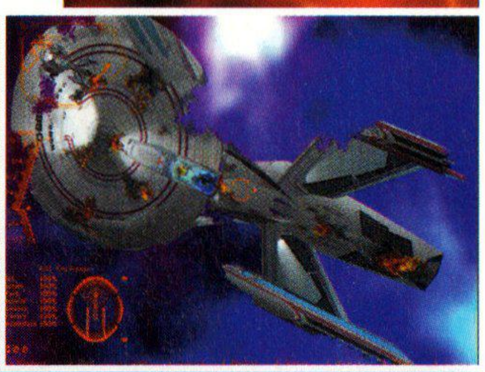
Although the game concentrates on starship tactical combat, there are also RPG elements. If you do well and win honour for your ship, your crew's morale and performance will be improved. Of course, if you lose honour, your crew will be less ready to serve you and their performance will suffer.

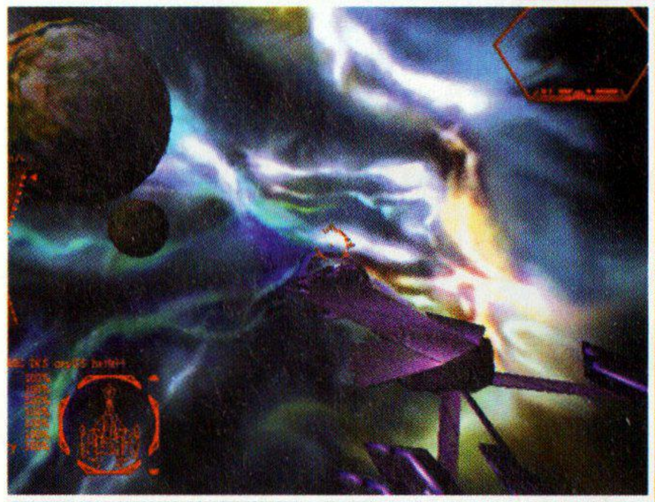
The game will include a multiplayer mode which will allow you to fly any of the fifty ships in the game, and a mission editor with which you can create an entire campaign. This game should appeal to a wide audience, and not just the huge army of Star Trek fans.

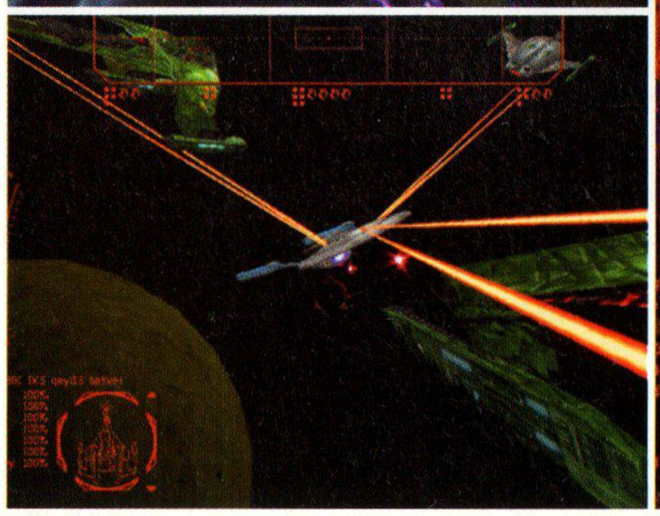














RESIDENT EVIL FOR N64

Yoshiki Okamoto from Capcom has revealed that he is indeed working on an N64 version of the smash-hit survival horror. However, it is unknown at this time whether that game will be completely new title or a port of the PlayStation games. No release date has been set, however, and the game has been given a working title of *Resident Evil 64*.

BATTLEZONE 64
CRAVE/ACTIVISION
DEZAEMON 3D
ATHENA
TBA
SUPER MARIO 64 II
NINTENDO
SIM CITY 64
NINTENDO
CONTRA SPIRITS 64
KONAMI
SUPER MARIO RPG 2
NINTENDO
REV LIMIT
SETA
OGRE BATTLE 3
NINTENDO
MEGAMAN 64
CAPCOM
EMPEROR OF THE JUNGLE
NINTENDO
POKEMON STADIUM
NINTENDO
GHOULS AND GHOSTS
CAPCOM
TETRIS
NINTENDO
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 2
INFOGRAMES
7TH LEGION
GT INTERACTIVE
MINI RACERS
NINTENDO
TOEJAM & EARL
GT INTERACTIVE
PIKACHU GENKI DECHU
NINTENDO
POKEMON SNAP
NINTENDO (JAPAN ONLY)
RAKUGA KIDS
KONAMI

PARAPPA THE RAPPA 2 REVEALED

Sony announce details of rapping sequel

In a surprise move, the sequel to Sony's highly acclaimed *PaRappa the Rappa* will not be titled *PaRappa the Rappa 2* and will feature a new lead character. The name of both the game and the new character will be *Unjammer Rami* – a name likely to be changed for the Western market.

The major change from the original is that the game will be a simultaneous two-player affair with multiple characters selectable. Onion Master returns, but the rest will be all-new, possibly even funkier characters. Included are Ma the Mouse (a member of Rami's rock band, Milk Can), a chainsaw-wielding beaver, a fire-fighting Dalmatian and a nervous-looking airline pilot.

The gameplay will remain largely unchanged from the original – a kind of 'Simon says' type gameplay, with players following a series of button presses. However, the style of music will be radically different and is reported to feature rock, house and drum n' bass.

Unjammer Rami is set for a spring release in Japan and a release in Europe before the end of the year. We'll keep you posted.



TOP TEN PC DOWNLOADS

TOTAL CONTROL TAKES A LOOK AT THIS MONTH'S BEST GAME DEMOS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD FROM THE INTERNET

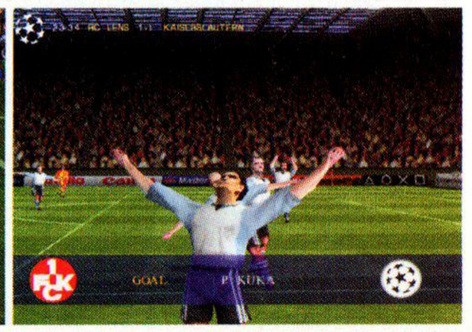
1	Resident Evil 2 – www.hotgames.com/games/reside/down
2	Brian Lara Cricket – www.download.com
3	Tonic Trouble – demos.ign.com
4	Excessive Speed – www.download.com
5	Gruntz – www.download.com
6	Tetrix 99 – www.download.com
7	Blood 2 – demos.ign.com
8	Droidworks – demos.ign.com
9	Requiem – demos.ign.com
10	Sim City (online) – ea.com

EIDOS: A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

UEFA Champion's League lands on PC and PlayStation

Eidos have signed a deal with ISM (International Sports Media), resulting in them publishing the forthcoming *UEFA Champion's League* game on both the PC and PlayStation. This will be the only official Champion's League title on the market, meaning that it will contain all the actual teams, players and logos, not just from the present, but from as far back as the tournament began. The game looks technically impressive with realistic and multiple shadows that are dependent on the time of day. All of the characters have been composed using models with skeletal weighting, so animation should be smooth as well as realistic. ITV trio Bob Wilson, Ron Atkinson and Brian Moore have provided the commentary, adding the finishing touches to what is shaping up to be a very well-polished game.





UPDATE

FIFA '99

INFORMATION

FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	EA Sports
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Football Sim
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£44.99
PLAYERS	1-4
RUMBLE PAK	No
MEMORY PAK	Yes
EXPANSION PAK	No

PC version reviewed in issue 3
SCORED: **76%**

The N64 seems to have wealth of quality football games available, not least of which are *ISS '98* and *World Cup '98*. It's debatable which is better. Simply put, this is the best version of *FIFA* ever, even eclipsing the PC and PlayStation versions of the same game. Surely it's identical, though? Well, no. The N64 *FIFA '99* includes some small but significant changes from its PC and PlayStation cousin that help the game become that little bit more accessible. Firstly, the goalkeepers are loads better and won't be beaten on the same soft goals as in the other versions. This adds immeasurably to the gameplay, and goals have to be earned rather than gifted by poor goalkeeping. Secondly, the game physics (namely the ball) are better, and the ball now bounces and rebounds off players more realistically. To top it all off, the game runs in the N64's high-res mode and, apart from a drop in frame rate, looks identical to the PC. Still, the game has many similarities to *World Cup '98*, and if you've got that game you might want to think twice before buying this. Apart from that, though, *FIFA '99* is the best football game on the N64 to date.
SCORE: **88%**

PLAYSTATION DATES

MARCH

ALIEN RESURRECTION
FOX INTERACTIVE

METAL GEAR SOLID
KONAMI

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER
EIDOS (PIC)

APRIL

X-MEN
ACTIVISION

MESSIAH
INTERPLAY

V-RALLY 2
INFOGRAMES

MAY

BLOODSHOT
ACCLAIM

SHADOWMAN
ACCLAIM

SURVIVOR: DAY ONE
KONAMI

SUMMER

SILENT HILL
KONAMI

DECEMBER

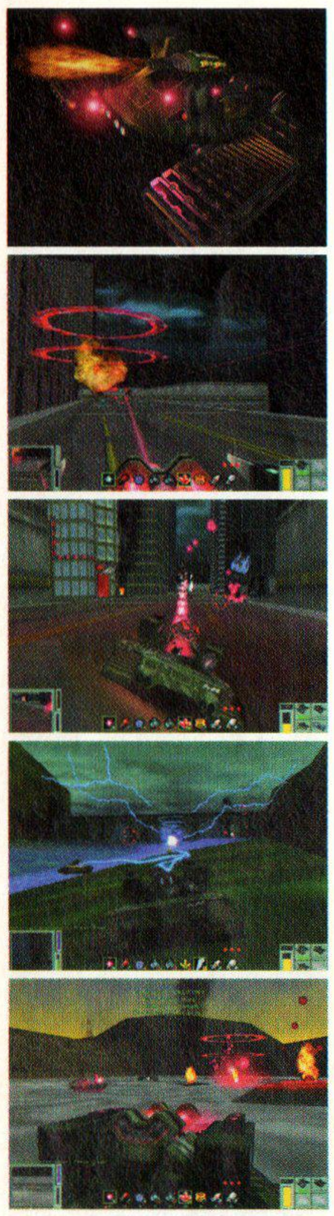
ANIMANIACS

TEN PIN ALLEY
ASC GAMES

FINAL FANTASY VIII
SQUARESOFT (PIC)

TBA

GEX 3
EIDOS



WESTWOOD FACE TOTAL RECOIL

Get totally tanked up in new PC title

Westwood, best known for their phenomenally successful *C&C* series, have been applying the finishing touches to one of their new titles, *Recoil*. The game is set in a doomed future where the global computer systems have turned against their creators, taking over the military in the process. You and your rebel faction must destroy the threat using your small army of remote-controlled battle force tanks. These state-of-the-art vehicles can be morphed from land to hover vessel to submersible form, and are equipped with 18 separate weapons.

Recoil is set over six unique mission-based worlds. The dynamic environments allow the player to alter the shape of the terrain, which is often a vital part of the game. It can be viewed from both first and third-person perspective, and though not essential, the game has been optimised for Voodoo 2 accelerator cards. The result of this –apart from a highly smooth game engine –is the inclusion of a number of superb special effects such as altitude-based fog, depth-based haze and horizon, coloured point lights that alter the entire environment, and ongoing vehicle damage textures.

With a 32-player deathmatch option also included, it'll be a title worth looking out for in the future.

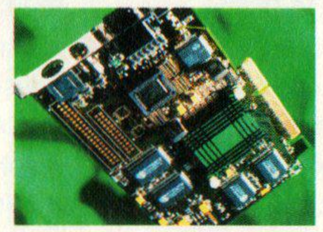
COMPETITION

PACE 3D EDGE COMPETITION

This month we've got a particularly groovy competition for you. Up for grabs are not one, not two, but three superb Pace 3D Edge Voodoo Banshee cards, which normally retail at £99. The three lucky winners will be upgrading their PCs and enjoying not just super smooth 3D graphics, but ultra high resolution 2D graphics as well, which will improve the appearance of many everyday applications. It can even display the results on your domestic TV. Since it combines the functions of two cards in one, the 3D Edge also saves room inside your PC, freeing up card slots for other devices such as a sound card or a modem. If you've read our review in the Hard Stuff section, you should have no trouble with these three simple questions.

1. ***What is the maximum 2D resolution possible with the 3D Edge card?***
2. ***How does the 3D Edge card connect to a TV set?***
3. ***What game comes bundled with the 3D Edge card?***

Write your answers on a postcard or sealed down envelope, along with your name and address, and post them to us at the following address:



Pace Yourself
Total Control
Rapide Publishing
1 Roman Court
48 New North Road
Exeter EX4 4EP

Closing date for this competition is April 9th 1999. The first three correct answers drawn from our postbag after that date will win a Pace 3D Edge graphics card. The Editor's decision is final.

TC RECOMMENDS

N64
ROGUE SQUADRON
Strangely, the N64 version of LucasArts' Star Wars shoot-'em-up works better on the N64 than on the PC. Also, it looks fantastic with the 4MB expansion pak.

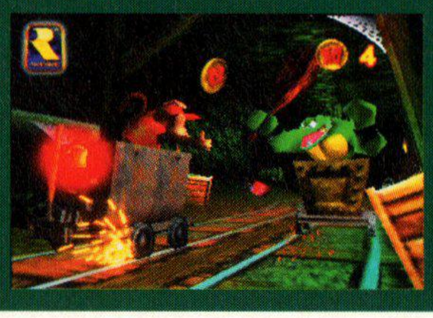
PC
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3
"It's not a game, it's a way of life", one PC magazine described Eidos's *CM3*, and we can't argue. The best football management sim ever.

PLAYSTATION
METAL GEAR SOLID
Finally out in the UK, Konami's stealth epic deserves to sell like hot cakes. A brilliant blend of gameplay and plot is the game's strong point (amongst many others).

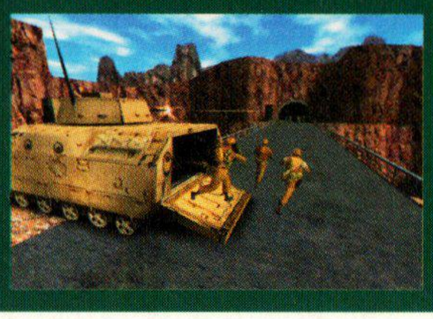
DREAMCAST
SONIC ADVENTURE
If you could imagine *Mario 64* on amphetamines, then you'd have a great idea of what *Sonic Adventure* is like. A roller coaster of a game.

TC MOST WANTED

N64
DONKEY KONG 64
No details yet, and only one screenshot. But judging by the excitement on the Internet about THAT screenshot, this game is going to be big.



PC
TEAM FORTRESS 2
With *Half-Life* taking up the majority of our lunch-times here at Total CONTROL, we can't wait for this deathmatch/strategy game designed around it.



PLAYSTATION
SOUL REAVER
This game is looking better all the time. Vampires, dimension hopping and wonderfully detailed graphics and animation will make this one of the best PlayStation games this year.



DREAMCAST
SHENMUE
The appearance of a short movie of *Shenmue* has made this game look better than we expected. Should be one of the biggest games of the year.

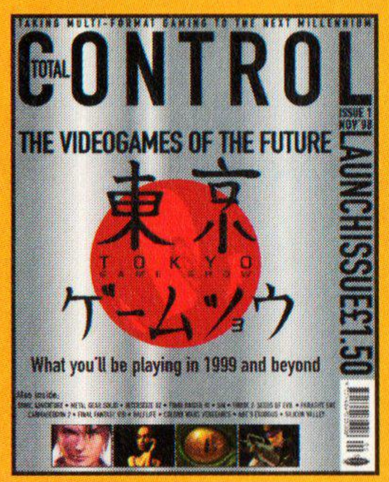


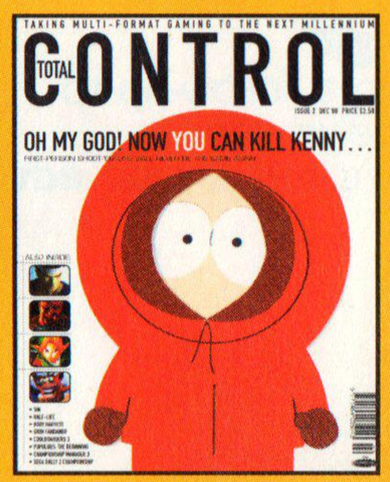
DESTROY ALL MONSTERS

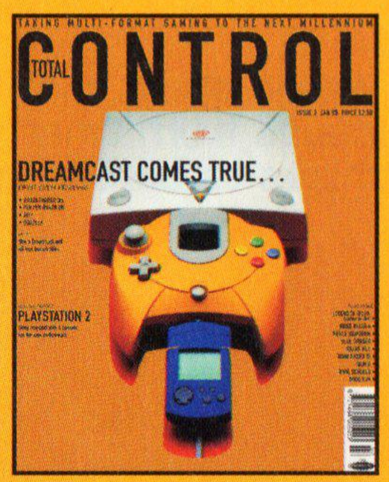
A new VMS has been released in Japan, along the lines of the *Godzilla* VMS brought out before the Dreamcast's release. The in-built game allows users to select one of 25 monsters to battle to become the King of Monsters.

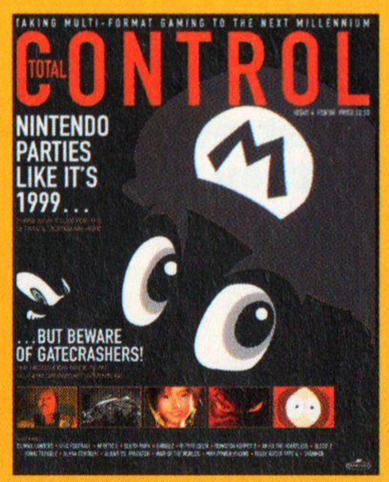
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Final Fantasy VIII

Expectations are high. How does anyone go about making a follow-up to the **biggest selling game** of all time? **Rest assured**, because from what we've seen of ***Final Fantasy VIII***, it promises to be Square's **most epic adventure ever**...

"Their story began that morning, but actually it has continued since the beginning of time..."

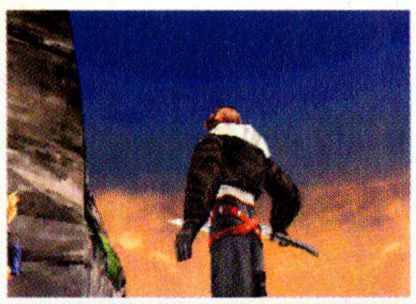


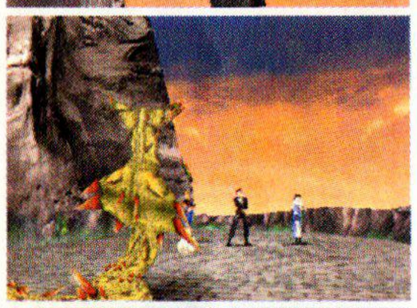
RE-RELEASING FINAL FANTASY

Final Fantasy VII has opened up a whole new world of games players to Square's most successful series. Not being ones to miss out on a commercial opportunity, they are repackaging the original SNES games, *FFIV*, *FFV* and *FFVI*, as PlayStation games. They will be identical to their SNES counterparts only with some all-new FMV included. Square are unlikely to release these games in Europe, but we're sure there will be plenty of US versions available from importers.











Although the battle sequences offer no great changes, the character animation has been improved

Squaresoft's *Final Fantasy VII* opened up the role-playing game to the world. Never before has a game of that genre made such an impact, and it was praised from all corners as a whole new type of game – a game where the actual gameplay was secondary to story, a game which was more like a movie than ever before. It was *Final Fantasy*'s marriage of the exploration of a fascinating world, intense and strategic battles, and the ever-twisting plot that kept you hooked. And hooked we were, on this life-dominating game. It will be a hard act to follow, but the indications are there that *Final Fantasy VIII* will be even better than its predecessor, promising a more adult storyline, an enhanced battle system, and even more glorious FMV. With the release of the game imminent in Japan, Total CONTROL decided to take a closer look at what could easily turn out to be the game of the year...

Interactive cinema

The plot of *Final Fantasy VIII* remains shrouded in secrecy, but then if you knew too much it would no doubt ruin what is likely to be the best *Final Fantasy* experience yet. However, Square have released a few background details to the game to whet our appetites. The game centres around a character known as Squall Leonhart, a seventeen-year-old man with a large scar on his face (the scar, apparently, plays an important part in the plot). This hints at a hidden or perhaps forgotten past, a theme which Square have already tackled in a number of their games. His role is similar to that of Cloud in *Final Fantasy VII* – he is essentially a loner, unfriendly and, at least on the surface, appears to care about no one but himself. Squall was a member of a military school known as The Garden. This is where six to nineteen-year-olds gather to learn military skills, graduates of which can join a foreign army after an intensive examination. In the game Squall is a member of SeeD, The Garden's own special forces group, where members are exceptionally gifted and work independently of any government or army. Square have stated that the game's theme is fairly similar to that of *FFVII*, but this time the romantic interest is more of a priority than the imminent demise of the world. A futuristic city with a halo above it also plays a large part in the plot, although exactly what is not yet known.

THE ACTUAL LOOK OF THE GAME HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF SOME CONTROVERSY IN JAPAN BECAUSE SQUARE HAVE DECIDED TO GO FOR A MORE WESTERN FEEL

The game's female interest comes in the form of Rinoa Heartilly, Squall's lover. Not much is known about her at present other than that she is also a member of SeeD with Squall and they met at Garden. The other characters revealed so far are Laguna Loire, an ex-soldier now a journalist; Zell Dintch, a 17-year-old street kid whose dream is to become a member of Garden; and Seifer Almasy, Squall's commanding officer in SeeD.

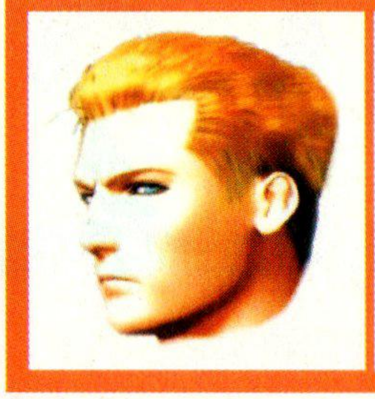
The battle system has been given more than just a little overhaul. Gone is the Materia system of *FFVII*, and in its place is something called 'Draw'. This ability allows characters to extract magic power and spells from their enemies and either use it directly against them or store it up for future use. The actual battle system itself is much the same and still follows the same pattern as *FFVII*. There have been a few, but significant nonetheless, changes. Limit breaks cannot be stored up and now have to be used as and when they become available. They become more frequent the lower the



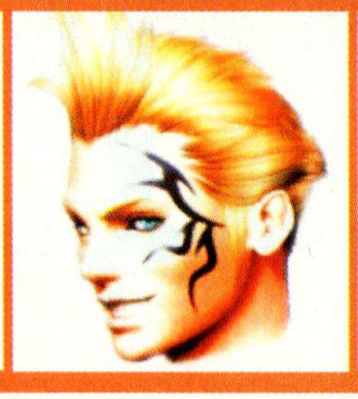
Above: These images taken from the *FFVIII* demo show the amount of work that has gone into making the game look very different from *Final Fantasy VII*

THE LEADING ROLES

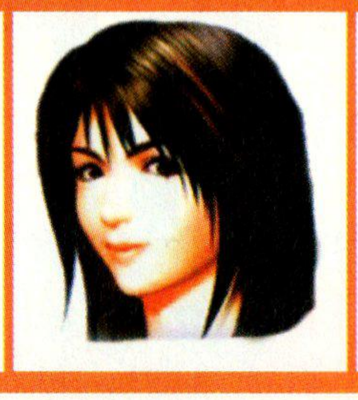
SEIFER ALMASY



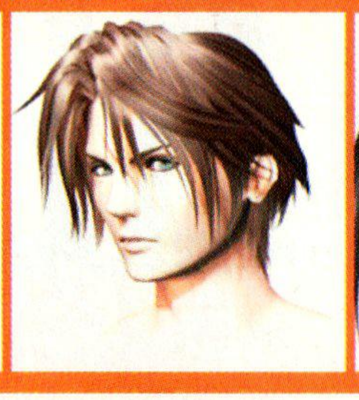
ZELL DINTCH



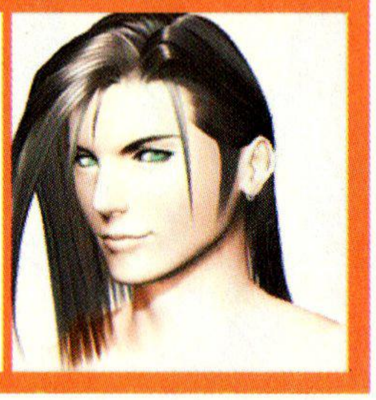
RINOA HEARTILLY



SQUALL LEONHART



LAGUNA LOIRE



energy of the character, and a new twist has been added. A limit bar will move as your character performs his or her limit break; on it are several markers which the player can press the R1 button in time with to exact more damage than normal. Hitting each of the markers at the right time will also add a bonus attack onto the end of the limit break. This rule can also be applied to normal attacks – pressing the R1 button at the right time does that little bit extra damage. A few of the annoying things about *FFVII*'s battle sequences have been eradicated, such as mistakenly casting a spell on the wrong character. If, for example, you need to cast a Phoenix Down spell, the arrow will automatically go to the dead person. Likewise, casting a Cure spell will automatically go to the person with the lowest health.

For Western eyes

The actual look of the game has been the subject of some controversy in Japan because Square have decided to go for a more Western feel. Gone are the Manga looks of the previous games, and the characters (in particular) have undergone a 'Westernisation' – they are now normal height and have no over-sized eyes. Now this has annoyed certain sections of the Japanese press as they see this move as a cynical one to bring *Final Fantasy* in line with the international market, which is exactly what it is – if a game appeals to more people then why shouldn't it sell more? Admittedly, we too are a little perturbed by this new aesthetic – part of the charm of *Final Fantasy VII* was the game's unashamed Japanese roots.

This aside, what we've seen of the game so far looks stunning. Most of what went before – the pre-rendered backgrounds, the polygonal characters and all the special effects – make a return, but the whole thing looks a lot slicker. Also, a great deal of work has gone into animating the characters; making them more lifelike helps to express feelings and moods more accurately than the abrupt, almost cardboard-like animation in *FFVII*. It also helps that the characters are fully texture mapped as opposed to *FFVII*'s use of shaded polygons. There has also been a concerted effort to implement more FMV into the actual gameplay, and the movies flow into the gameplay seamlessly; FMV for the backgrounds, while the PlayStation generates the characters. Overall, the feeling of the whole game is more mature and cinematic – the characters are players on a stage.

As for the enemies, these are in the same tradition of *FFVII*, where Square's designers have been allowed to let their imaginations run riot. What we've seen so far, though, is that there is a mix of what could be considered 'real' (giant cobras, mechanical insects and so on) and bizarre, nightmarish creatures, including a huge flying demon with a massive chin. Not quite as much attention has gone into them as has with the characters, but they are still a massive improvement over the monsters seen in *FFVII*. Aurally, much of the familiar music from *FFVII* returns, albeit in an rearranged form, so all those tunes which delighted/irritated you will be back in style.

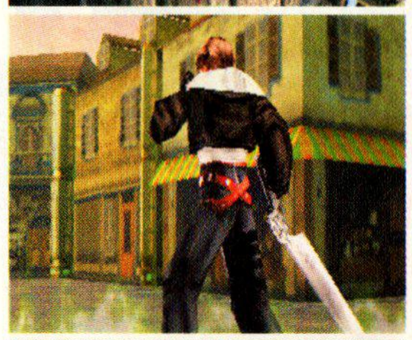
WE HAVE NO DOUBT WHATSOEVER THAT FINAL FANTASY VIII WILL BE THE GAME TO OWN FOR PLAYSTATION THIS YEAR

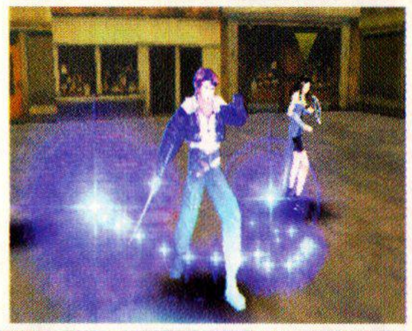
Imagining the impossible

We have no doubt whatsoever that *Final Fantasy VIII* will be THE game to own for PlayStation this year. This is as close as you could get to a guaranteed hit on any format, and Square's predictions for sales exceed that of the previous game by some considerable margin. It looks like Square have stuck to the formula which has made the series such a success in the past and have only tweaked and improved on a few areas. The game looks incredible, plays as well as you can imagine, and will no doubt have a story that would not be out of place on a cinema screen.

The budget for *FFVIII* has been set at an astonishing $30,000,000, and *FFIX* is said to have a budget of around $80,000,000, suggesting that this will be an even better game (what machine that will appear on has yet to be announced). Anyway, we shouldn't be too concerned about that game yet as Square have announced that *Final Fantasy VIII* will be released on four CDs in Japan towards the end of February. We'll bring you more details then. **TC**









Limit breaks make a welcome return, only this time they are even more spectacular and the player has a certain amount of input into the move

FINAL FANTASY VII

The game that awoke the West to *Final Fantasy*. It is hard to describe what impact this game had on the lives of millions of games players around the world. It was a game where the story alone was enough to keep you glued to your TV set – let alone the game's strategy and battle elements and the numerous sub-games that were reason enough to turn the game on. However, not everyone liked the game (it's Japanese nature is one reason cited), and it was not without its irritations (if not faults). The random battle element was possibly the most annoying, especially when trying to explore a new location. Despite this, *Final Fantasy VII* is one of the most involving, engrossing and life-stealing games ever made.





CARMAGEDDON 2





Total Control takes a look at one of the most **controversial games** of the decade. With **N64, PlayStation**, and even **Game Boy versions** nearing completion, we examine whether the gaming **phenomenon that is *Carmageddon*** justifies its reputation.

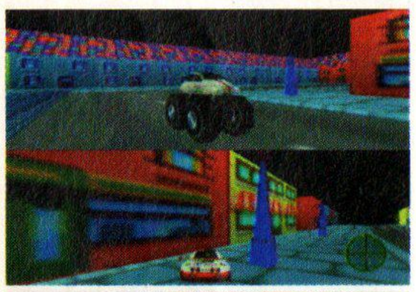
INFORMATION	
FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	SCi
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Violent Driving Game
PLAYERS	1-2

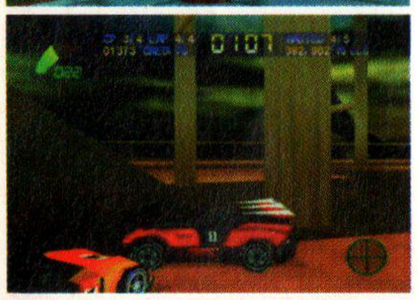
INFORMATION	
FORMAT	Gameboy
PUBLISHER	SCi
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Violent Driving Game
PLAYERS	1-2

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	SCi
DEVELOPER	Software Creations
STYLE	Violent Driving Game
PLAYERS	1-2



Although the choice of vehicles you get is very diverse, it's the secret cars like the hippy van that you'll want to be seen in





A lot of care has gone into the modelling of the cars which feature accurate damage and lighting effects

When *Carmageddon* was released on the PC two years ago, few could have predicted the game's success. The title has gone from strength to strength and is one of the few computer games that could be credited with having a cult following. Although there have only been two games to date, SCi have gained themselves a world-renowned game series with a firm and very solid foundation. Like it or not, you can expect the *Carmageddon* brand name to linger for many years to come. This is a fact that many people would prefer not to admit – not necessarily the paying public or the majority of faces in the industry, but the idea of further additions to the controversial series will almost certainly not come as welcome news to the beleaguered members of the BBFC.

CARMAGEDDON TAKES THE STANCE OF A GAME THAT IS ONLY INTENDED TO BE ENTERTAINING, NOT CHALLENGING, AND NOT TOO INVOLVING EITHER

Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now ran into serious of problems during its bold journey through the British Board of Classification – and not surprisingly either. It's easy to understand how those who are concerned about the effect of video game violence on young minds may consider a title that encourages people to plough through an endless parade of innocent pedestrians an unhealthy concept. With the obvious and unavoidable problem that no matter what age rating a game like this is given, younger people will always be able to find themselves a copy of it somehow, the game has proved a sticky dilemma for those people in charge of labelling what the public is or is not allowed to see and do. After all, as technology continues to advance, the concept of *Carmageddon* can only be portrayed more graphically and more violently than before, and bearing in mind the strong support for the game amongst the industry, the appliance of censorship can only become more and more difficult for the BBFC as time goes on.

Think while you drink

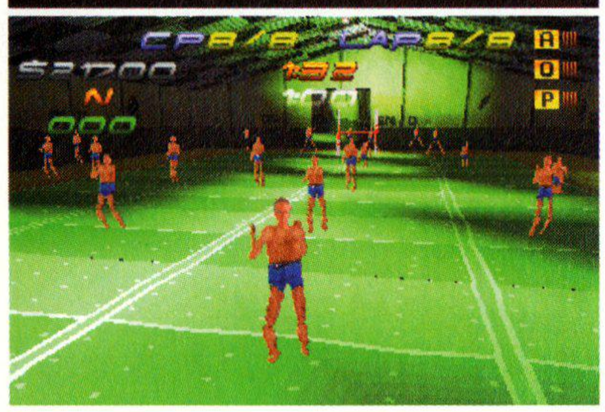
But forget all that. If the question of censorship was put towards the gaming public, there would be an indisputable majority that couldn't give a toss about what some executive in London thought about the psychological effects of violent computer games. We want more blood, more sex, and more



The graphical differences between the PlayStation and N64 versions are not too high. The N64 screen blur and PlayStation pixelation can be used to tell them apart

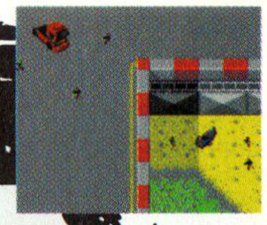


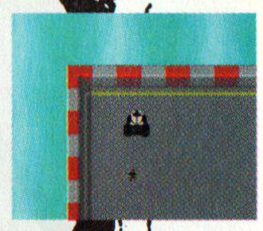


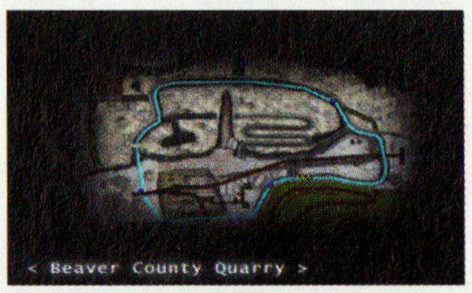


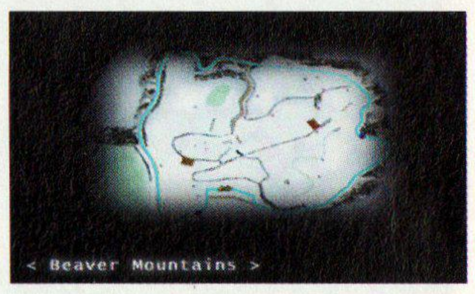
THE BOY DONE GOOD

As you may have already read, *Carmageddon* will also be making an appearance on the Game Boy and Game Boy Color over the next few months. Obviously a 3D version would be impossible, but SCi have overcome this by using a top-down viewpoint similar to *Grand Theft Auto*. Details on the game are sketchy at the moment, but the basics of the game should remain - hopefully they will have been able to create the levels using some elements of 3D, so bridges and hills can still provide stunt opportunities. It's already looking great, and we'll be following its development closely in our Reportage section.

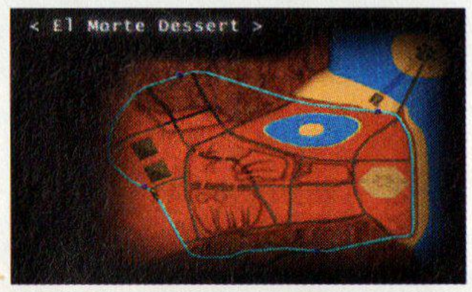


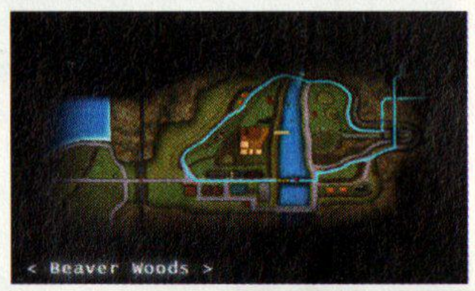


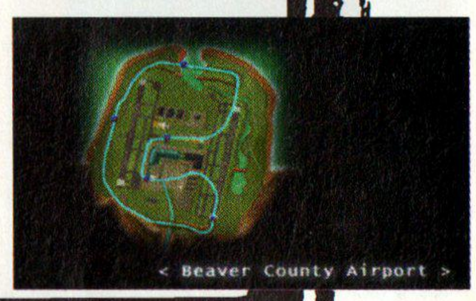












violence in our computer games, and over the last few years we have had it to a certain extent. Look at the rise in profile of the computer game – it has been games like *Quake* and *Resident Evil* that have pushed computer games into the limelight... games like *Carmageddon*.

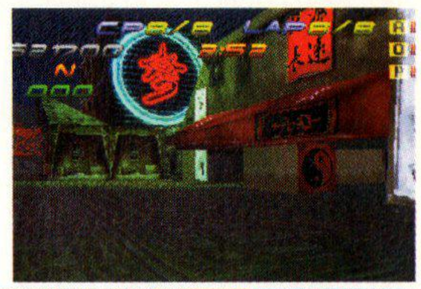
Let's paint the town red...

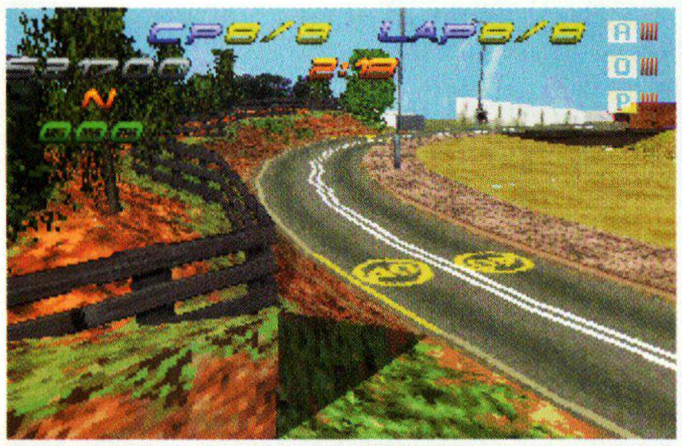
SCi are now preparing to further expand the *Carmageddon* empire by porting the game across to the N64, PlayStation and Game Boy. The simple concept behind the game remains true to all formats – if you've never played the game it would appear on paper to be nothing more than a violent race game. Of course, in reality the gameplay is actually quite different. Rather than being placed on a pre-defined race circuit, you are strapped into a car with a whole arena to explore. In each there are a number of checkpoints that represent a route through the level, and, if you wish, you can follow the track around, collecting money and time bonuses as you pass through each, but this is by no means the limit of what you are intended to do. Levels can be completed in one of three ways: complete the predetermined number of laps; write off all of the other cars in the race; or turn all of the pedestrians into a red pulp. There is no position meter in the game for a reason: it is not a race... at least, not against the other cars. Instead you have a time limit that is continuously counting down – if you ever allow it to drop completely the race ends and you'll need to go back and start it over again. Time can be extended, though, and is not usually a problem until the later levels. Passing through a checkpoint, picking up certain bonuses and ramming through pedestrians all add precious seconds to your clock. With this in mind you realise that straying off the course will usually bring much greater rewards.

Bad point?

So what's the point, then? This is a common question that gives the game the cult status it has – you'll either like the game or you won't. If, after you play it you find yourself asking that question, then the answer is probably 'none'. The single, unique thing about *Carmageddon* is that it takes the stance of a game that is only intended to be entertaining - not challenging, and not too involving either. If you don't think you'd enjoy smashing up cars, performing ridiculously dangerous and doomed stunts or mowing down as many pedestrians as possible, then this is not the type of game for you. If, on the other hand, you think the idea sounds entertaining, then you will almost certainly fall in love with *Carmageddon 2*. The idea has been superbly put across in the game – spinning through the air after hitting a ramp with only the left side of your car,

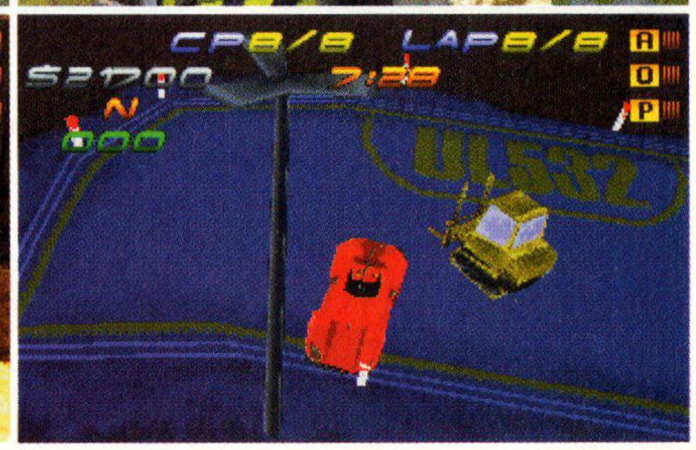
ENJOY SMASHING UP CARS, PERFORMING RIDICULOUSLY DANGEROUS AND DOOMED STUNTS OR MOWING DOWN AS MANY PEDESTRIANS AS POSSIBLE









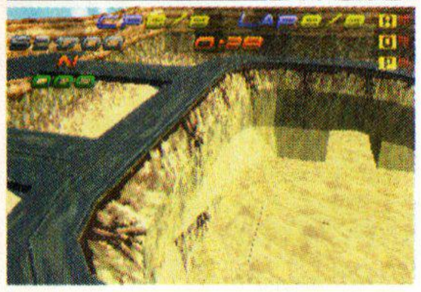


Level design in a game like this is obviously important but this is a factor that the developers have put a lot of thought into. Because of their diversity there's a lot of life in every level

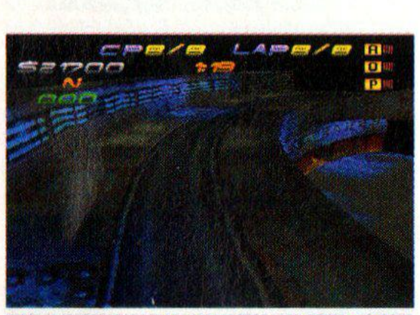


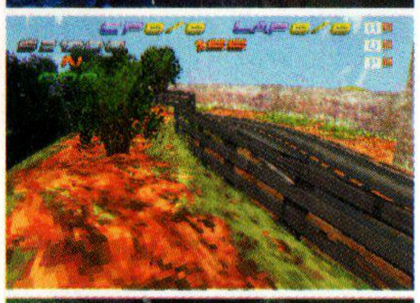


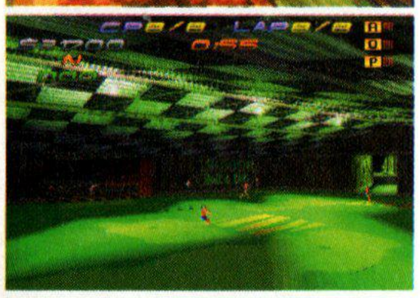




With these completely open maps, learning the ins and outs of each will take the player much longer than your average racing game

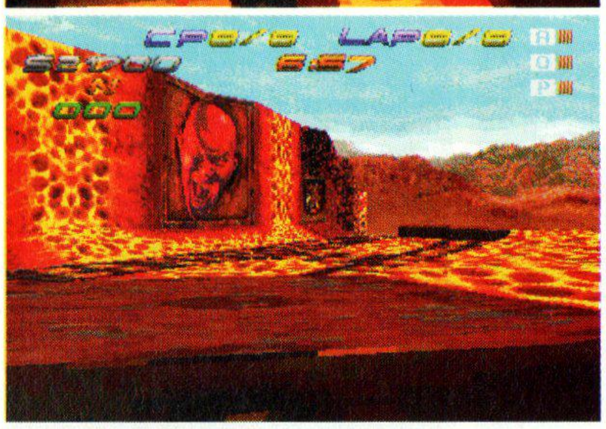


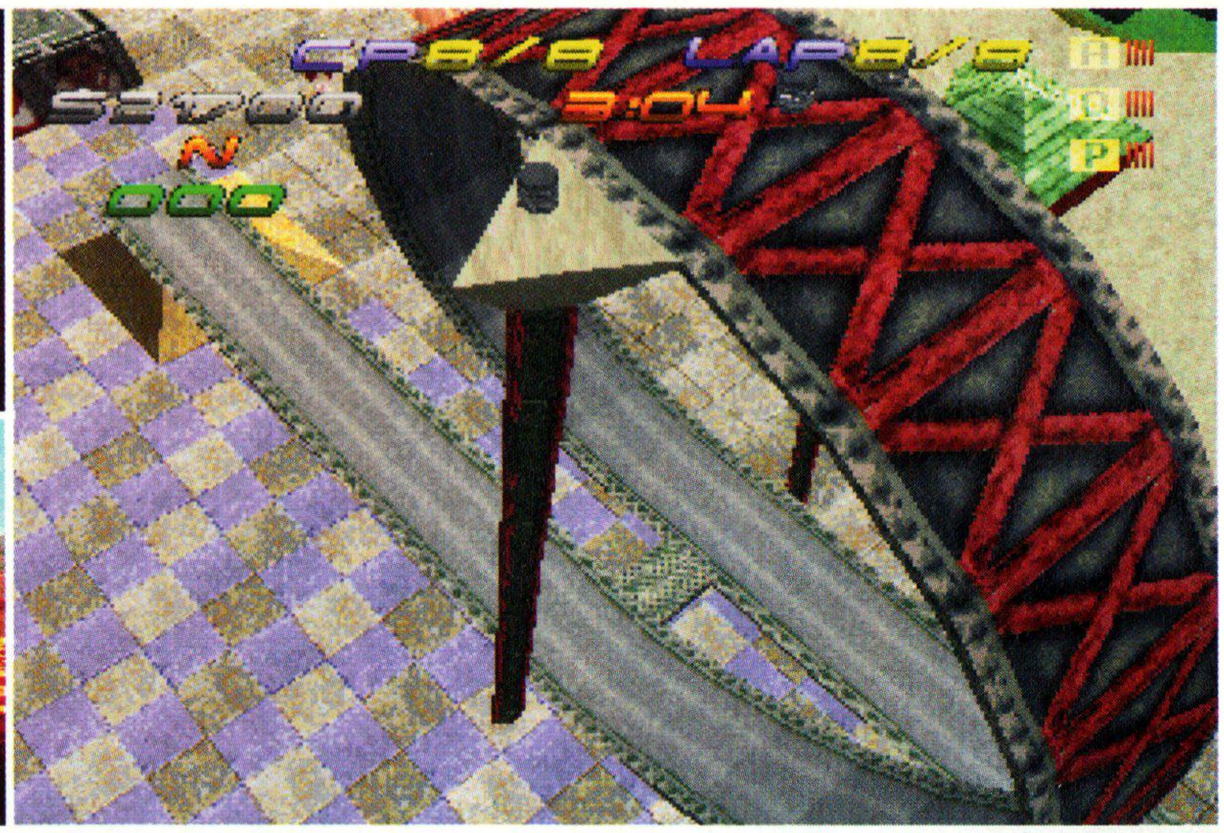




The variety of levels on offer promises hours of fun







If you play well enough you can unlock some of the hidden tracks, most of them won't be realistic but will allow for some great stunts

and sliding through three hapless civilians before smashing head-on into an enemy car is extremely satisfying. Events such as these are commonplace in the game, and extra cash is earned for achieving multiple kills, head-on collisions and piledrivers, where some unfortunate pixelated soul finds himself between your front bumper and a concrete wall. Cash rewards

high cliff onto the vehicle directly below next to a gas station is that your vehicle can sometimes (95% of the time, in fact) gain more damage than the others. The damage models in *Carmageddon* and its sequel were excellent. The perfectly accurate dents looked superb, and if enough damage was caused, your car would be dented to such an extent that not all

SPINNING THROUGH THE AIR AFTER HITTING A RAMP WITH ONLY THE LEFT SIDE OF YOUR CAR AND SLIDING THROUGH THREE UNWARY CIVILIANS BEFORE SMASHING HEAD-ON INTO AN ENEMY CAR IS EXTREMELY SATISFYING

are also generously dished out via several other 'extra style bonuses' that often occur more by luck than judgement but all make good saves for the replay. Money is perhaps the biggest incentive for planning extravagant kills in the game. With this you can repair and recover your car mid-level, upgrade engines and armour, and trade your vehicle in for a new machine. Eventually you'll find yourself strapped inside the ultimate in carnage creation.

The problem with attempting to launch yourself of a 200ft

of the wheels would touch the floor, or it could even be completely ripped in two as in the famous Roger Moore 007 car chase. Luckily, if such an event arises, you can immediately repair you car for a price, and as if by magic you find yourself back in a perfectly operational vehicle complete with spanking new paint job. The damage also significantly affects the car handling – things like your car leaning to one side or your bonnet not being firmly secured and flapping up, obscuring your vision, need to be attended to as soon as possible.

Play time

It appears that SCi have placed the focus primarily on the new PlayStation version, obviously due to the fact that it will be this version that is expected to reap the highest rewards. The PlayStation version is not simply a port of *Carmageddon II*, it is a combination of elements from both PC games. There will be 30 massive arenas – some from the first game, some from the second, and others that will be unique to the PlayStation. These new tracks include a ski resort and a medieval stunt track. There are also several new 'themed levels' such as a giant pinball table and an elevated speed track. The 30 drivers and cars are a similar mix, with new vehicles including a super-powered pick-up truck, a turbo-charged Mini, and a cop car. At







Many of the levels will also have objects that must be activated before other areas and secrets routes will become accessible



At any time during the race the player will be able to upgrade the armour, engines and offensive power of their car. This is very expensive though, and you'd be well advised to wait until you know that you have enough cash in reserve to bail you out of danger if you find yourself in a sticky spot later on in the race.

the moment it is still undecided as to whether the PlayStation version will feature red-blooded pedestrians – the BBFC will obviously have a harder time deciding on the restrictions for the console versions. It's likely that SCi will be releasing two versions of the game for different regions around the world – we'll keep you informed of the BBFC's decision in our Reportage section as soon as it has been confirmed. It has already been announced that animals will be featuring in the game, though, but details on how many and what species have yet to be made.

The PlayStation version will also contain the mission-based element from *Carmageddon II*. After finishing a small number of levels you must race a course with certain objectives ranging from simple checkpoint races to much more interesting tag games involving smashing into each car at least once in a given time limit. There will also be an in-depth training mode, loads of weapon add-ons, a two-player split-screen mode and a host of multiplayer game modes and options (apparently).

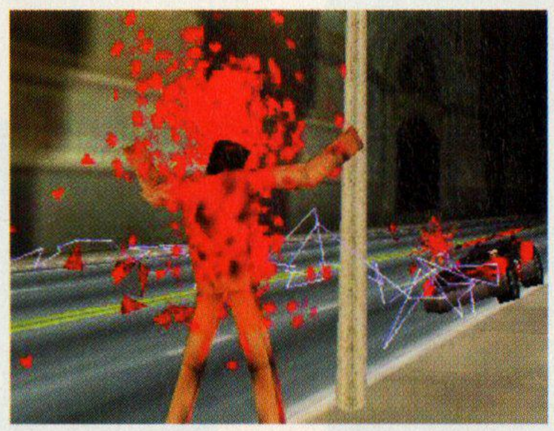
One not-so-unexpected feature of the N64 version is that green-blooded zombies will take the place of the pedestrians, but with a content like *Carmageddon*'s, N64 owners are pretty fortunate that the game ever arrived on their machine at all. The N64 version will have fewer cars than the PlayStation title – there will be 23 in total, including a motorbike and sidecar that will be unique to the N64. This loss has been more than made up for by the extra tracks, which total an impressive 37. The ski resort level will also be on the Nintendo cartridge, and a commercial airport level will also be unique to this version. The N64 game will not share the same game structure as the PlayStation or PC. You begin with a choice of ten cars and drivers to use, and after completing the game ten more of each are unlocked and the game must be completed again using the new selection. As with the PlayStation, a comprehensive two-player split-screen mode will also be included. The N64 version will use the 4MB expansion pak, and is graphically looking very similar to the recent PC title, even if the levels appear to be unfinished and sparse.

The final countdown

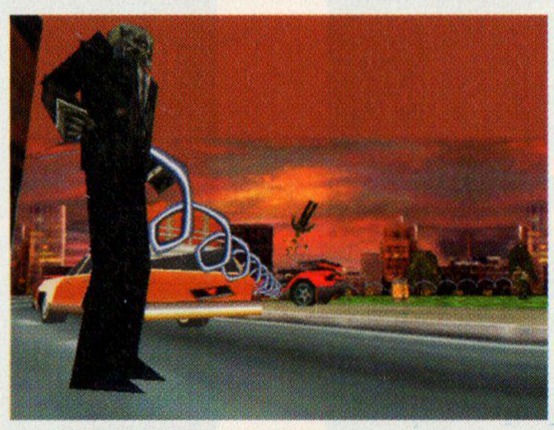
Being a huge follower of both games on the PC, it's hard to see how the console conversions could go wrong. The gameplay, being so simple, should come naturally, the only worry is that the driving mechanics may not be as good, but such an obvious concept would be difficult to overlook. With the popularity of the game on the PC continuing to rise, success on today's consoles seems almost inevitable. SCi have a definite winner on their hands, and I doubt that the series will end here. **TC**

BLOODY GOOD

Power-ups are an important feature in most computer games, and *Carmageddon* is no exception. There are loads of turbos, and pedestrian-killing items to be found around the levels, and some can be extremely bizarre. Items like the Electro Bastard Ray that zaps all of the pedestrians you pass are extremely helpful, but by far the strangest item to find is the affectionately named 'mutant-spiky-tail-thing'. Essentially a huge flail strapped to the rear of your car, it can be very helpful when taking out surrounding pedestrians but will dramatically affect the handling of your car, which is not too surprising.









Control Yourself LETTERS

Gore in video games, new consoles, crap PlayStation titles, **and, of course, another letter** from Mark Coyne. Keep the letters coming **(preferably in something** resembling English) and we'll **continue to print as many** as possible.

RETURN OF THE MARK

I have read the replies in TC 4, which are pretty reasonable. Some of my earlier rantings obviously tread on a lot of people's feet. However, I think I should set the record straight regarding my position on the games front.

My machines of choice were the Saturn AND the PlayStation. I got the Saturn when it was released, the PlayStation a year later, and another year later I had neither, instead opting for a PC. I'm not going to butter up the Dreamcast, but instead allow TC 3's great Foreign Office feature to do the talking. I appreciate your views on the subject, but "manufacturing a machine... giving thousands of people worldwide pleasure", from Mr. McQuillan is a bold statement. Recent news suggests over 450 titles have appeared on the machine, in contrast to about 50 decent ones (and only a fraction are actually made by Sony). Proportionally, this is really something, especially as it's praised for games being taken more seriously. Does this machine deserve the respect it seems to achieve? With developers wiping all their bad wares on it, and it coming to the end of its natural life-cycle, it's time to move on, and not when Sony say so (about another two years probably). People who play games definitely deserve better. There is sufficient enough room for three major console developers around the world to succeed financially... And If I'm really biased, then I would like to ask Mr. McQuillan how many MegaDrive or Saturn games has he actually played for any respectable length of time? As for Mr. Daelmans... the *Resident Evil* series, *FFVII*, loads of different racer games – I can play all these on my PC with enhanced graphics and features. *Crash Bandicoot* is crap – I should know, I made the mistake of getting it, although I can't say anything about the sequels except that I can't believe they were released, although the *Tekken* series IS excellent, but *Half-Life* plops on all of the above. Sony, I know, are not a games company – you were right. But aside from third party, Sega and Nintendo know how to produce AMAZING games, and I have confidence in that alone. *Nights*, *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, *Mario 64*, *Banjo* and *Zelda* eat the opposition alive.

P.S. If anyone else chooses to revile my points, I would prefer it if they spelt my name properly. Anybody agreeing on my points, feel free to drop TC a line! Thanks for an amazing third issue. It outdoes all competition.

Mark Coyne – Via email







BALLS OF STEEL

Having just finished reading your third issue, I feel I must write to you and complain about the clear bias in you articles. I am a Sega man through and through, but I can still appreciate other consoles and publishers. You, however, seem to be joined at the hip to the PlayStation. The Dreamcast is the biggest jump in console technology since CD-based consoles appeared, and you devoted all of eleven advert-riddled pages to it compared to two full pages of unconfirmed PlayStation 2 rumours. Okay, so maybe that wasn't the best example, but what I am trying to get at is the fact that you will undoubtedly hype Sony's next console to the max. The Saturn failed due to poor advertising on Sega's part, but they have learnt from their mistakes and plan to publicise the launch of the Dreamcast in Japan all over the world. They cannot do this without articles in major gaming mags like yours. CVG have managed lots of informative articles concerning the Dreamcast, and so have Games Master, but you have not done nearly enough work in alerting people to the Dreamcast's arrival. Please don't abandon Sega at the most critical stage in their life. You owe it to all of the Sega fans out there that need up-to-date info on their console.

I know this letter is a bit pessimistic on my part, but poor coverage of the Saturn launch started its demise, and letters complaining about that came too late. In writing now I have the chance to ask you to sort out your Dreamcast approach before it's too late. You probably don't have the balls to print a letter of criticism, but please hear what I'm saying.

Thom Airs – Oxfordshire

Err... are we talking about the same Issue 3, Thom? The one with the Dreamcast on the front cover? The one with the first UK reviews of all four launch titles?

I think eleven pages of coverage for a machine that won't be released in Europe for another nine months is more than enough. We were actually expecting to receive letters complaining that we were devoting too much space to the Dreamcast, seeing as such a small percentage of our readers actually own one. As for being 'joined at the hip to the PlayStation', I can only assume that you are referring to the fact that it gets more pages of coverage than the other consoles. The obvious reason for this is that there are more games released on the PlayStation – we can only cover what's out there.

CHOICE CUTS

CHOICE CUTS

I believe during 1999 the N64 will go to the top until the Dreamcast is released in September. The PlayStation will continue to release loads of crap games. But the PlayStation 2 will be very popular.
Paul Tuson – Via email

Nostradamus, eat your heart out.

Nintendo have been living off of Mario games for too long. It's getting real boring, guys – how about a fresh new angle?
Mark Holliday – Glasgow

Boring! Are you insane? Maybe Nintendo should stop producing *Zelda* games as well!

Which do you think is a better racing game – *Gran Turismo* or *Ridge Racer Type 4*?
Russell Harris – Essex

They're both extremely good games that won't disappoint. Basically it just comes down to whether you're after an arcade (*R4*) or slightly more realistic racer (*GT*).

...Death maybe swift for Cliff!
Les Smith – Hull

If he blows up another Dreamcast, most definitely.

MAD FOR IT

These pages are sponsored by Mad Catz. Every letter printed in its entirety will win a joypad, and the 'Mad letter of the month' wins a steering wheel plus either a camera, a Walkman, or a Mad Catz Wrist Rumbler. Plus you get to see your name in Total CONTROL.

Mad Catz Peripherals – By Any Means Necessary

NEXT MONTH

Now that we have some prizes to give away, please don't forget to indicate your preferred format somewhere on your letter. You'll find that winning an N64 pad doesn't do you a lot of good if your only system is a PC. If you'd like to comment on this month's issue or raise some issues of your own, please don't hesitate to write to us at the following address:
Control Yourself
Total CONTROL
Rapide Publishing
1 Roman Court
48 New North Road
Exeter EX4 4EP

MAD LETTER OF THE MONTH

PHYSICALLY SICK

Congratulations on your excellent magazine. I have two points to bring up here:

1. Has anyone else noticed the number of sequels released in the gaming market this year? Many of these games are just bigger (supposedly better) versions of the previous game, offering very little in the way of new features and originality. For example, look at *Tomb Raider III*. This game has been overly hyped, yet it plays exactly the same as the previous versions. Fair enough, there may be a few graphical enhancements, but what else? Another is *Crash III* – it's just spin, smash boxes, collect apples and win the game. That's it.

Admittedly, some developers do go out of their way to change their games for the sequel, such as *Populous III* and *Zelda*. Both of these are newer, more original versions of previous games and they both play very well. Other developers don't seem to realise this.

2. Why do games producers seem to think that the more gore and blood in a game the better? Games such as *Carmageddon II* and the *Mortal Kombat* series have blood pouring out of them, yet they have no playability whatsoever. Other games like *Goldeneye* and *Tekken III* have no blood and are still great games. For me, watching blood spill out everywhere in a game makes me feel physically sick and makes me wonder what type of twisted, evil soul would want to incorporate this feature into a game.

That's me done. Again, thanks for a great magazine – I shall be reading it long into the future.

Gerard White – Co. Down, N. Ireland

1. The trouble with sequels is that people just keep on buying them; we can hardly blame developers and publishers for not bothering to come up with new concepts and game engines when an existing license is apparently all they need to guarantee a Top 10 position for their game.

2. It's true that in some cases excessive amounts of blood 'n guts add little or nothing to what is all-too-often poor gameplay. However, the publicity gained by announcing a game that contains enough gore to outrage parents etc. gives publishers a level of awareness about their product that would otherwise cost them a fortune in advertising. And just for the record, despite being one of the most shocking games ever conceived, I think Carmageddon II *is a rare example of a game that uses gore to enhance gameplay rather than replace it.*

NO DISRESPECT BUT...

In last month's *Pen Pen Tricelon* review in the Foreign Office section, part of your review stated that "there are only four tracks available to start, but it has been hinted that more will become available as you progress throughout the game".

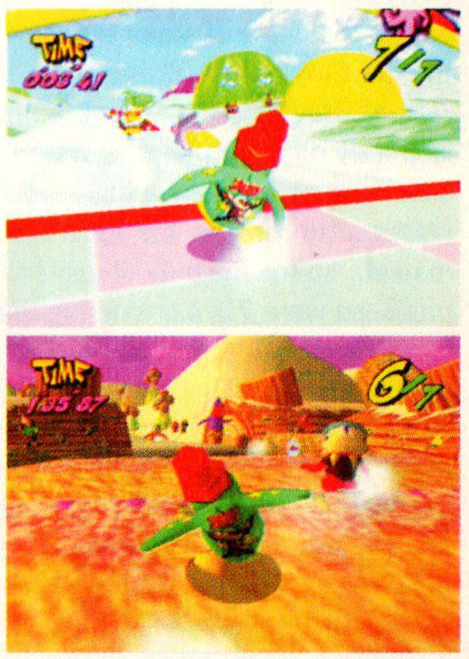
This indicates that you have not played the game to its full extent, so how can your overall score be accurate if you are unsure about the size of the game? The life span of the game, be it large or small, should be an important factor when reviewing a certain game and giving it an overall score.

No disrespect to the team, but how do your readers know whether to purchase the game judging by your reviews?

Richard Broughton – Grimsby

Although it's true that the life span of a game is definitely an important fact when we are reviewing it, it's simply impossible for us to complete every game that we review – especially when working to strict deadlines. If we had waited to review Zelda *until we had completed it, our review would have come out a full month after the game, by which time I suspect 90% of our readers would already have bought it. Perhaps no bad thing in the case of* Zelda*, but what of Acclaim's* South Park*? Hopefully with our brutally honest review we have managed to save most of you from making a big mistake. If our review had been too late to prevent this, it would have all been for nothing.*

In the case of Pen Pen Tricelon*, our job was obviously made more difficult by the fact that all of the text is in Japanese. As it turned out, there were no secret tracks, just a single secret character and lots of small power-ups for the existing characters.*



NOT A GREAT FAN OF SEGA

I'm just writing to add my tuppenny's worth to the great Sega/Nintendo/Sony debate, which often runs along the line of "Sony are killing off the games market by being so mainstream". First of all, allow me to clear up my own personal bias. For some unintelligible reason (something to do with *Sonic*, I think), I am not a great fan of Sega. However, I love Nintendo (SNES ruled), and I am more than contented with my current console, the PlayStation (though I may buy an N64 if I get some cash). Now, I have heard a lot of people argue that Sony, by appealing so much to the casual gamer, is killing off creativity in the market, and while alive, the Saturn had just as many high quality games as the PSX. They say that because Sega are a talented bunch of developers (something I do not contest), they are also more on the "hard-core gamer's" side. With Sony being the populist, corporate, image mongers that they are, they can only stand for the profits of men in suits. (NB: As this debate usually rages between Sony and Sega fans, Nintendo are rarely mentioned a lot, but when they are they are given similar purist praise as Sega.) I go along with this to a certain extent. While I feel it is true to say that Sega the development house is more in touch with gamers than Sony are, and are more likely to come up with innovative, playable games, when it comes to hardware they are not so traditional. It wasn't that Sony were more evil that allowed them to win the console war circa- '96-'97, it was the fact that the Saturn was a vastly inferior machine, terribly underestimating the role of polygons in the "future of games". And if people say that Sony created this mentality by promoting graphics over gameplay, then why were, even at the time, Sega going all out to produce better and better 3D arcade boards? The Dreamcast is a perfect example of the fact Sega are just as money hungry as Sony. They are already hoping to aim the machine at a more mature audience (the Sony tactic), and by making the machine so PC friendly, surely they are simply begging for a multitude of rushed PC to Dreamcast ports, especially if the machine becomes successful. Sony were victims of their own success to a certain degree. It is the fact that good games and a good image have propelled them to such heights that so many poor games are being developed to go along for the ride. In fact, I personally believe that only Nintendo can really be said to be completely devoted to the development of originality on their machine, via very strict screening, and the image they have created as a machine for cute platformers (as opposed to a machine for Ministry of Sound snowboarding break-dancers). Perhaps having such developers as Rare, DMA, and even NCL themselves, gave them this confidence. But then again, the N64 is almost a complete failure in Japan, so maybe Sony are the future... **Alexis Nelson – Via email**

EXTREMIST VIEWS

After reading both Mr. Coyne's letter and its subsequent replies, it seems that there are only extremist views on display here. While the PlayStation might be the commercial king of the console market, a lot of its games are sorely lacking – there are proportionately few high quality titles in comparison to the amount of dross on the shelves. Simple proof of this is to walk into any high street games store and count the number of games that reach above the 50% mark in TC. The answer: not very many. That being said, the PlayStation has done a lot to further gaming and make it considerably more inclusive and less hard-core. However, in doing this the intellectual level that games have had in the past has had to be sacrificed to make way for a more general mass (and thus lucrative) market. As for the Saturn, it has by no means bombed. Sales in Japan (up and until Dreamcast's release) were comparable to the PlayStation's, and often better. So obviously there were games on the Saturn that were of equal standard to the PlayStation (e.g. *Grandia*, *Sakura Taisen*). However, the Japanese market is grossly different from the West's. The Saturn was essentially a high-end 2D platform (to cater for the Japanese market), so the majority of games produced were 2D. Considering that the Western market seems to have a phobia with anything that isn't 3D, the Saturn was destined to fail. This doesn't mean that the games on the Saturn are bad in comparison to the PlayStation, just unappreciated. Unfortunately the majority of gamers and prospective gamers suffer from some kind of ostrich-based affliction concerning Sega's machine, in that they cannot seem to remove their heads from the ground so as to allow it a fair chance. Hopefully gamers might have the foresight to give Dreamcast and Sega the benefit of the doubt.

Ollie – Via email

SONICALLY LOW PRICES

Thank you for compiling a magazine that is both well-written and well-presented, and also well-endowed with useful information at a sensible price. (There's no point in soldering a futile tips book to the front cover for the sole consumption of simpletons who seem intent on eliminating the main purpose of playing a video game only to bump the price up to £4.95!)

Anyhow, the main aim of this letter is merely to state the fact that now is the time to purchase a Sega Saturn! I own the N64. My brother owns a Saturn. I pay £39.99–£49.99 for new games. My brother pays 99p–£4.99 for new games! That's right, NEW. Granted, most of Sega's games are grotesquely poor, but I did used to own the Saturn myself, and one cannot deny that there are plenty of high quality games as well. I still maintain that *Sega Rally* is the best racing game out there, having played *Gran Turismo*, *F1 Grand Prix*, *Colin McRae* etc. There is also *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Nights*, *Worldwide Soccer* and the rest. I was in Dixons, Kingston the other day and noticed a stack of Saturn games all priced at £4.99. Knowing my brother, like me, is obsessed with sports games, I thought I'd buy him *Olympic Soccer* (poor graphics – great playability). The cashier tilled it in, and the price had now dropped to £2.00! After waiting ten minutes for her to find the game in their huge, bulging stockroom, presumably buried under a stack of newly arrived Psion Palmtops, I was informed of an even greater bargain. She had in her arms a *Virtua Cop 2* & Lightgun package. The price for this arcade-perfect game? A hefty ninety-nine new pence! This was a brand new box, which originally sold for £69.99. She told me there were many more Saturn jewels to be had at dumb-strikingly-low prices in the back. I gave her five quid and almost felt guilty as she handed me my change. We've all had a good laugh at the Saturn's expense and the mountain of shite that has resulted (which may soon be looked at as the eighth wonder of the world). However, if these Sonically low prices become more widespread, I feel sure that the Saturn could well become a worthy second console to many owners of superior machines.

David Furst – Surrey



NO RELATION, HONEST

Phat magazine, well worth buying. Anyway, on to what I'm writing for.

It has to be said that Derek Mugridge's letter in Issue 3 was right. Let's face it, out of all four of the Dreamcast release titles, which ones are good and also original? The answer: none of them. Okay, I have to admit *Sonic Adventure* does look good, but isn't it just a glorified copy of *Mario 64*? Is it only Nintendo who can create original games? In the long run even Rare copy Nintendo's games. You wait, not long from now you'll soon be seeing games that copy *Zelda 64*, just as so many copied *Mario 64*. It's about time companies started trying something new instead of copying the ideas of geniuses like Shigeru Miyamoto. I just hope Sony don't make the same mistake by copying everyone else's ideas when they produce the PlayStation 2/2000/whatever they're calling it.

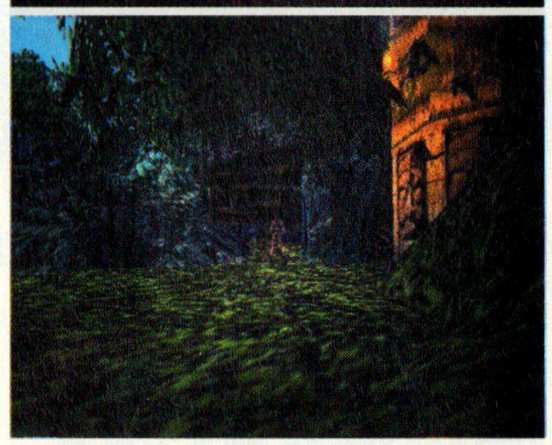
Another thing – I really didn't know who to send this e-mail to. Could you possibly get a separate e-mail address for the Control Yourself mail bit? Any way, keep the quality work up.

Andy Calvert – Via email

With regard to the Dreamcast launch titles, Pen Pen Tricelon *isn't a bad game, and it's definitely original. It's true that* Virtua Fighter 3tb *isn't at all original, but then there is definitely something to be said for sticking to tried and tested formulas.*

The fact that your letter has appeared on these pages obviously means that it arrived at the correct destination.





BREASTS ENLARGED

I found out where Lara Croft was copied from. I was watching the classy Japanese film 'The Hidden Fortress' the other day, and I noticed that the heroine of the film (made quite a long time before *Tomb Raider*) was wearing clothes that I remembered from somewhere. Then I saw a haircut that I remember, a face that I'd seen somewhere else, then I saw... Okay, you get the picture – Lara Croft is a complete copy of the heroine from 'The Hidden Fortress', only with breasts enlarged by about 200%.

Aaron Souppouris – Via email

Dreamcast™



sex (seks) *n.* **1.** the sum of the characteristics that distinguish organisms on the basis of their reproductive function. **2.** either of the two categories, male or female, into which organisms are placed on this basis.

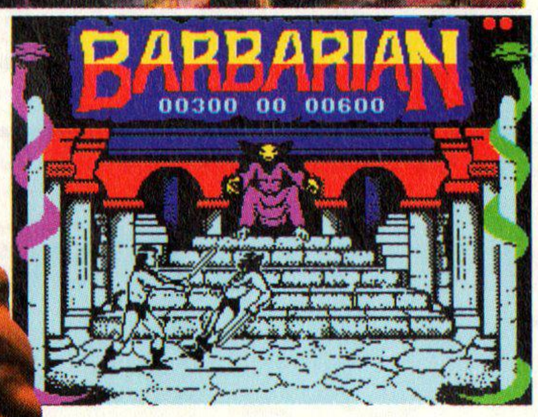
sexy ('seksi) *adj.* sexier, sexiest. *Inf.* **1.** provoking or intended to provoke sexual interest: *a sexy dress*. **2.** feeling sexual interest; aroused.

sexist ('seksist) *n* discrimination on the basis of sex, esp. the oppression of women by men.

women in video games

Are we entering **a new age of liberated female role models,** or are we just having the silk pulled over our eyes once again? Total CONTROL **declares an amnesty** on cleavage jokes and looks at the emergence of **strong women in video games...**







"Exactly what happens next depends on the female demographic. It's out there alright, but it needs to be more vocal"

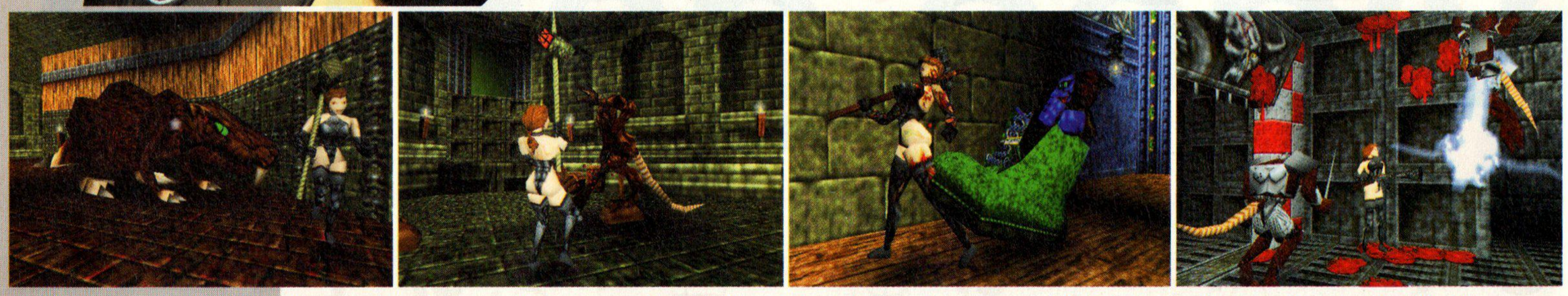
Lara Croft is a difficult person to deal with. Skipping over the obvious jokes about getting shot and her obviously not being real, Lara would appear to be a significant step forward for the fairer sex with regard to video gaming – on the surface at least. She's super-hard, highly intelligent, improbably athletic, expert driver, gunsmith, kung-fu master, crack shot with any type of weapon, deep-sea diver, and as for her body... well, let's just say someone at Core must have REALLY resented being bottle-fed. At last, one would think, we live in an age where the last bastion of cartoony and escapist fun doesn't take its cues from Barbie when it comes to female characters. So why, as The Times noted last Christmas, does Lara cause passing women to sneer at both game and player?

ONE WOULD THINK WE LIVE IN AN AGE WHERE THE LAST BASTION OF CARTOONY AND ESCAPIST FUN DOESN'T TAKE ITS CUES FROM BARBIE WHEN IT COMES TO FEMALE CHARACTERS

The games people played

Having reached the edge of the abyss too early, perhaps it would be better for us to take a small jump backwards in order to get the usual two step run-up to the issue. After all, the idea of women as princesses to be rescued has been drummed into us for no short period. You may think yourself a seasoned gamer for being able to remember MC Mario and the Ambassadors of Funk belt out the line "Even my ma she thinks I'm crazy/But I got to rescue Daisy," but the Total CONTROL team can still remember the heady days of buying Sinclair User magazine in black and white, and greeting the monthly letter of complaint about the notable lack of wimminfolk in our favourite culture/pastime.

Of course, the issue was a lot less emotive back then. Make no mistake that the messages were there, with the sixteen pixel drawing that was meant to represent the damsel in distress in every *Donkey Kong* game, but all in all it's hard to get fired up about a centimetre high sprite in cyan and black. And that's exactly why the cough mixture hit the fan to such an extent when the now-legendary *Barbarian* surfaced courtesy of Palace Software. *Barbarian* was a one-on-one beat-'em-up, and one of the earliest precursors to games like *Soul Edge* and *Samurai Spirits*. Two identical Conans slugged it out on screen. All hits did the same damage except for a powerful blow to the neck which earned you a clean decapitation and rewarded you with an impressive spray of *Vandal Hearts*-style blood and a hilarious little animation where a goblin dragged the body off, contemptuously hoofing the loser's noggin aside in the process. However, the controversy came not from the graphic 8-bit violence but from the nearly-naked page 3 lovely Maria Whittaker posing on the adverts in a swimming costume and looking incredibly chuffed about hanging off the muscular leg of the main character. So fiery did the *Barbarian* controversy rage



Red Lotus, star of *Deathtrap Dungeon*. Has there ever been a more blatant attempt to cash in on the success of Eidos' other well-known cleavage, Lara Croft?

CLOSE, BUT...

Of all the games companies, Nintendo really do take the prize for out and out insulting sexism. Many of you will have seen the *Zelda* TV commercial playing over last Christmas – "Willst thou get the girl, or play like one?" Not only is this slogan offensive, it's totally needless; there's at least seven *Zelda* games, ranging from the Game Boy to the CD-I, and in none of them can you "Get the girl." Most cringeworthy of all, though, was their campaign for *Super Metroid* which screamed at the buyer with an exhaustive list of all the megadeath weapons and gadgetry in Samus Arran's arsenal, followed by the comment: "Well, she IS only a girl."



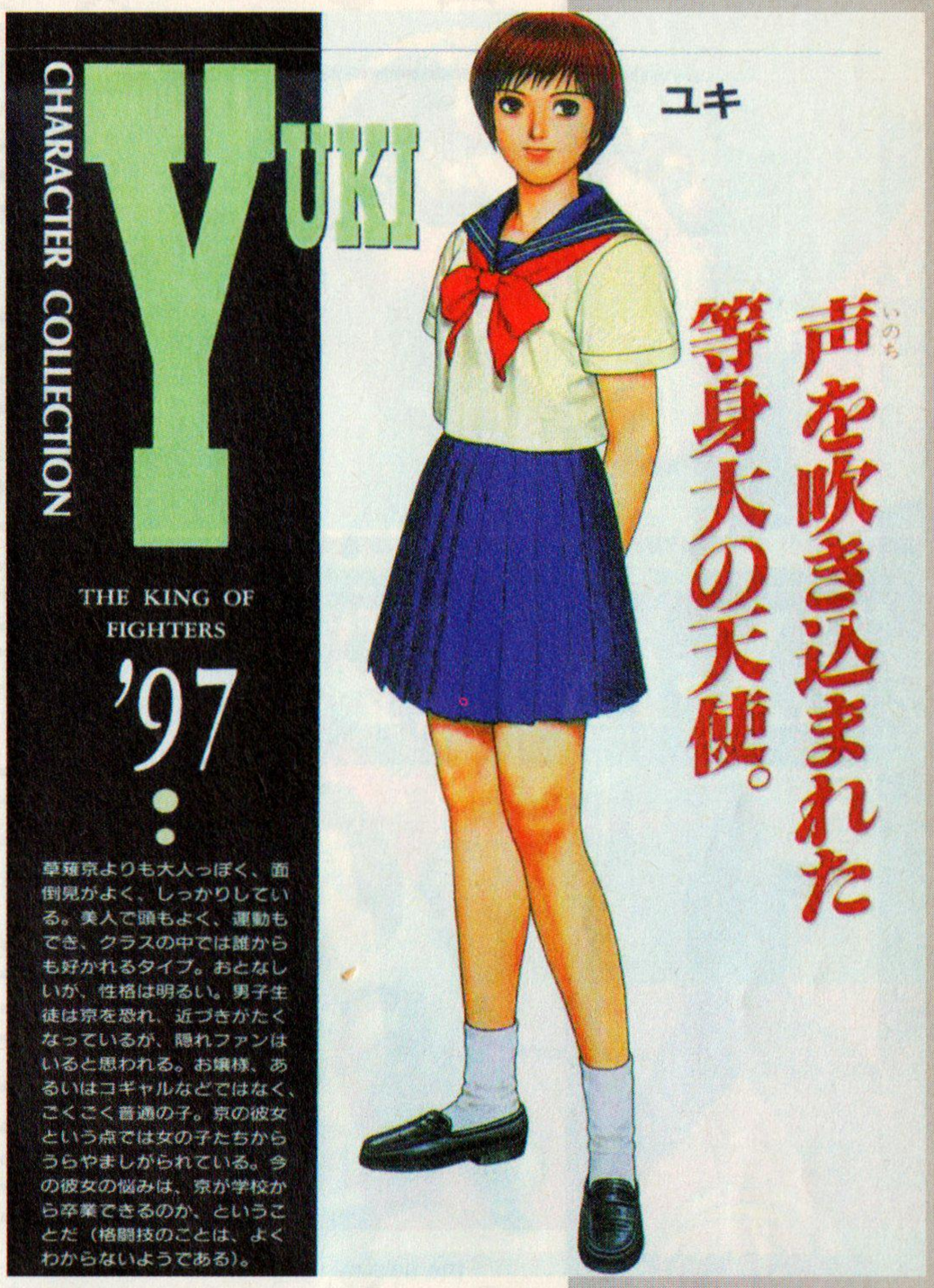


that Martech just could not resist jumping on the back of it by releasing *Vixen*, which saw a scantily clad Corrine Russel in Racquel Welch mode, whipping dinosaurs in full lipstick and eye-shadow(!). Palace for their part didn't make the same mistake again – time rolled on, and the Princess was back in B*arbarian 2*, this time slaying monsters alongside her swarthy lover. Although earlier games like the well-loved *3D Ant Attack* and *The Rocky Horror Show* gave the choice between playing a stick man or a stick man in a dress, this was the first memorable example of the princess-rescuing industry admitting that women could get medieval on yo' ass too. Maria came back for the game as well – this time wearing even less!

And so it was that the video game industry began the agonising decade-long climb towards the strong female character. You don't have to have too big an anorak to recall some of the more impressive near-misses... Remember *Blam! Machinehead,* which presented us with a strong, academic female role model and proceeded to stick her in bondage gear and cuff her to a nuclear bomb? The problem is that male fantasy will intrude. Of course it will – the video game demographic (i.e. you lot) is generally male, so the designers will go for it like a vampire for the jugular. This makes it difficult to address the real irony of the issue, which is that not only is fifteen years of princess-rescuing not what the female gamers have wanted, it doesn't seem to be what the male ones have wanted either (if Lara's success is anything to go by).

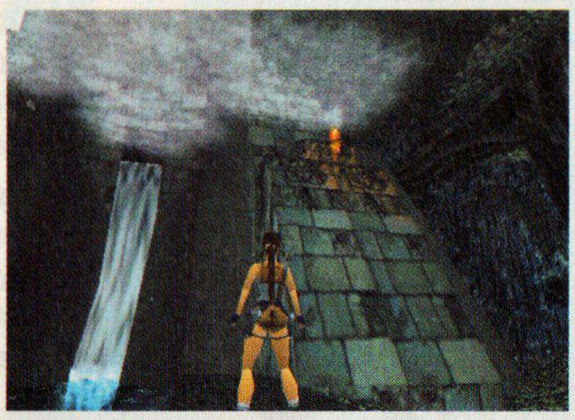
No boyfriends please, we're gamers?

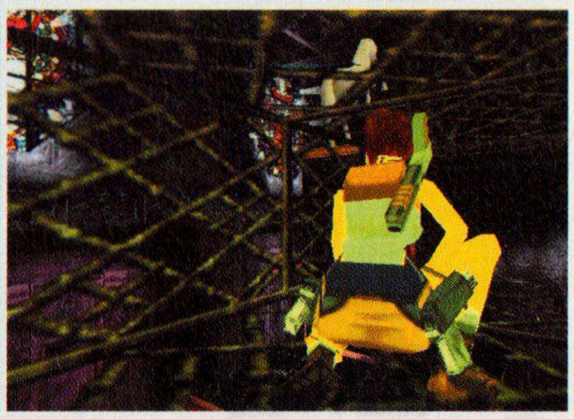
It's certainly interesting to compare notes with the Japanese. The Japanese love their heroines, and have done for a long time, so the Eastern market isn't quite so heavily dominated by dominatrixes with guns. Early games released in Japan feature the Master System classic *Phantasy Star*, in which a bereaved girl sets out to avenge the corrupt monarch who had her brother killed. Two thousand years have passed in the Algo star system – and ten in the real world – and fans are still glued to their Sega machines. Similarly, Valis put a Samurai movie style twist on the 'schoolkids get sucked into demon world' premise that we've all seen a billion times. ("Look! A Dungeons and Dragons ride!") Valis featured two girls who are taken from this dimension, one becoming a warrior of good and the other of evil. However, the first game ended with a duel to the death and set

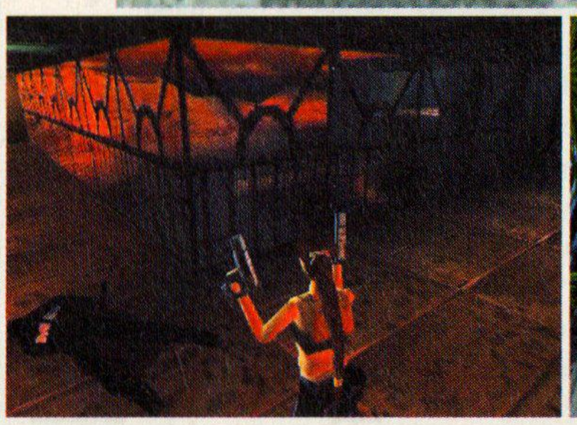


Schoolgirls feature heavily in the fantasies and fighting games of the Japanese











Has Lara Croft reached saturation point? Judging by the Christmas sales of *TRIII*, the answer would seem to be no. Some fans have perhaps gone too far with 'Nude Raider 'pics











the heroine up on an epic quest of pain and righteousness. What this shows us is that whether the game is as sublime as *Phantasy Star* (a fifth instalment of which is in development for Dreamcast) or as awful as the tepid series of platform slashers that constitute the *Valis* series (pray we never see a Dreamcast version), a strong female character with a sword and a reason to use it is a sure-fire route to a massive cult following. Advancement aside, however, if there's one thing that our formative attempts at well-rounded female characters (no bosom joke here – we think you can handle it) share with their Eastern counterparts, it's the way their roles in the game work.

Watch your feet now, because we're about to enter the most tangled area of this whole mess. You see, video games are unique in that most of the time the player will go all-out to identify with one central character. In a film with a desirable female main character, a male audience could enjoy watching her fall in love by placing themselves in the position of the man involved. A video game affords no such flexibility. Few male players want to force themselves to have tender feelings of female fulfilment or even to put themselves in the role of a woman in love with a man, and so the whole argument for these female characters being brave steps forward for feminism begins to come apart at the seams. The heroines of *Phantasy Star* and *Valis* are out for revenge for their brother and their friend – and nothing else. *Deathtrap Dungeon*'s Red Lotus kills any man why approaches her. Both the characters in *Resident Evil 2* have tender emotions, but only Leon is allowed to fall in love – Claire is relegated to maternal feelings for Sherry. In this way, Lara Croft will never do anything more than drop hints that she's available (if a berk like Larson has a chance, who doesn't?) so that she can skip with gay abandon and horrendous violence through the lives of everyone represented by Bloke With Scruffy Flat on the *Tomb Raider III* TV commercial.

An unattainable woman may be, as Tony Gard once said, the most desirable, but this is another thing altogether. It's also this simple element that pretty much spoils any optimism you may have been storing up about the advancement issue – female role models these women may be (well, maybe not in Lara's case), but the overall picture is still one of a commercial market playing to a male audience. Surely in real terms there is no real advancement unless games start to be programmed either for a unisex audience, or towards female issues in the way that they currently are towards male ones as well.

Attract mode?

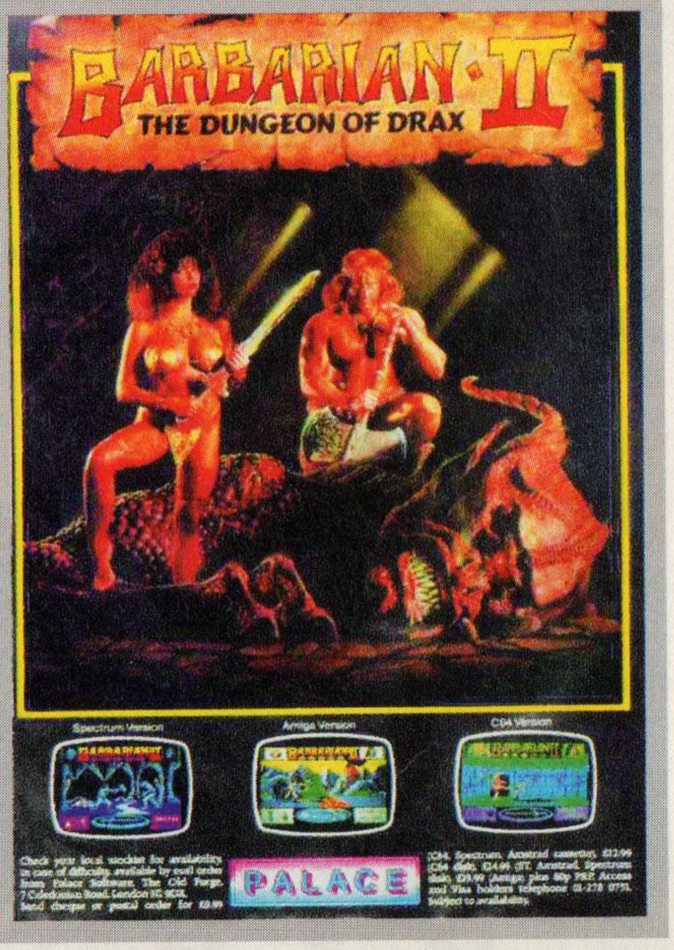
It would be foolish to examine the issue without mentioning dating games. Dating games are pretty much a Japanese preserve. They are essentially

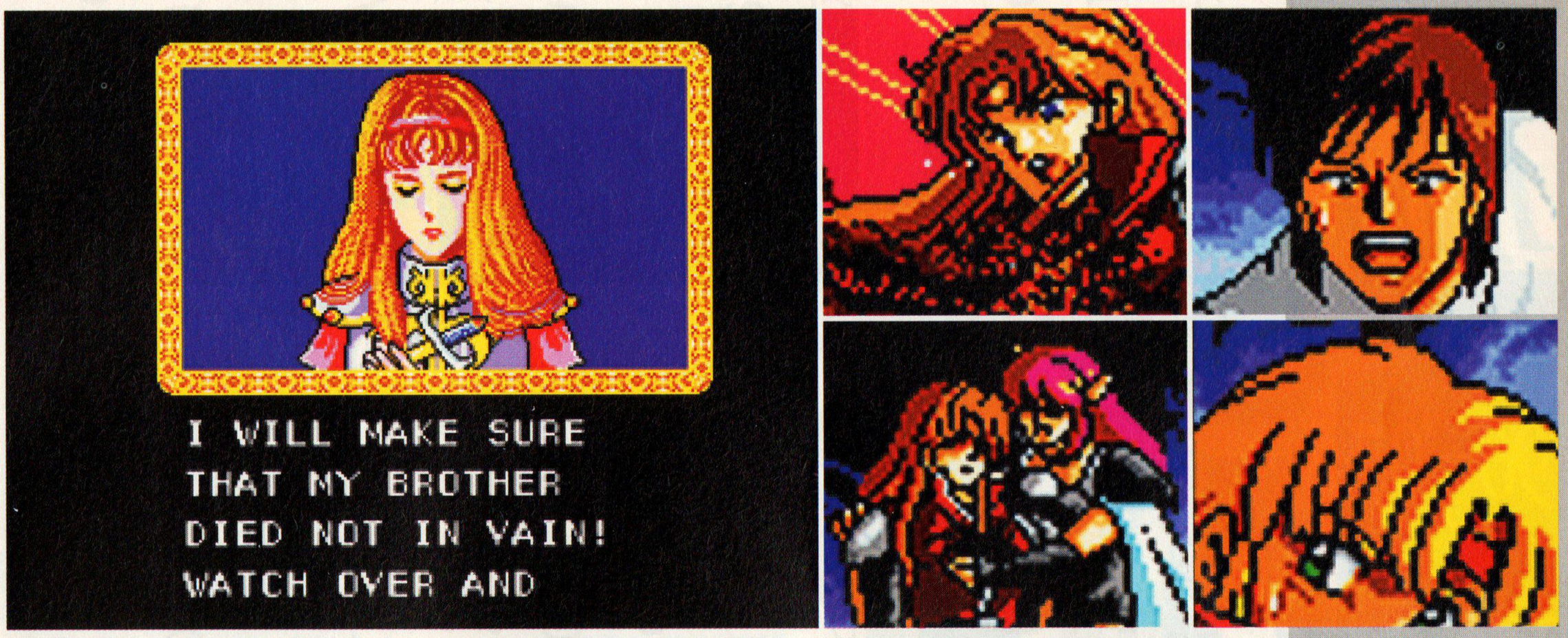
A STRONG FEMALE CHARACTER WITH A SWORD AND A REASON TO USE IT IS A SURE-FIRE ROUTE TO A MASSIVE CULT FOLLOWING

EARLY DAYS

Pictured here in all its dubious glory is the advert that ran in computer magazines of the late eighties, and would have made your mum choke on her cocoa if she'd found a copy of it lying around in your bedroom. I found this copy of the advert in my enormous retro magazine collection, and, funnily enough, it just seemed to fall open at that page.







point and click or menu driven graphic adventures which usually feature a varied female cast and a male central character. Each woman in the game has their own end sequence, and in this way the game allows for the player to develop a love interest in any of them. The gameplay of these games is varied. Some, for example, are little more than a multiple-choice question game whereby a sequence of correct answers reward the player ("Reward" in this case means anything from touching and romantic dialogue with tastefully handled love scenes to out-and-out pornography, depending on the game in question). Some, on the other hand, are complex masterpieces: Konami's *Tokimeki Memorial* (regarded by many as the king of dating games) features thousands of situations, places to take your date and, most problematically, a limited ration of telephone calls which your character is allowed to make in every game turn.

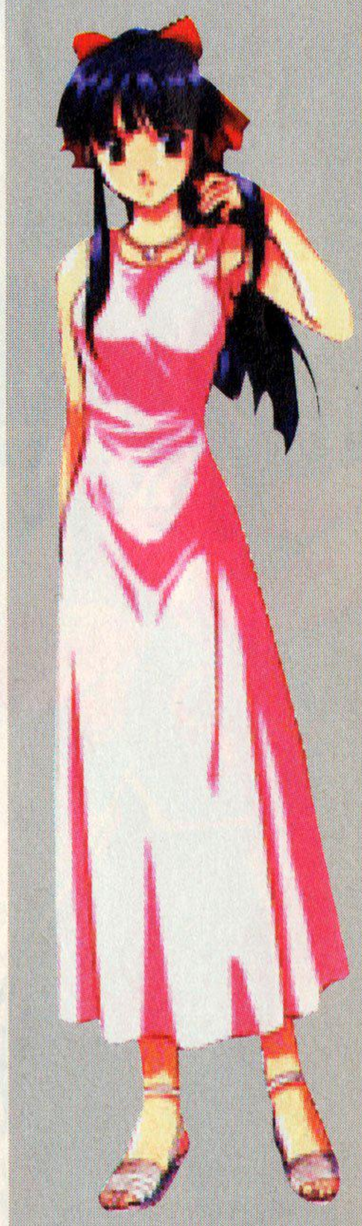
Cleverest of all, though, is the way in which *Tokimeki*'s women will hen together behind the main character's back and talk about him, so if he is cruel or tactless to one of them the others will get to hear about it... and form opinions accordingly. Furthermore, annoy any character beyond their tolerance and they will set a "Bomb" on you. This is not a real bomb, but it's just as dangerous – once set, the player has a limited time to butter up the character in question in order to "Defuse" it. Allow the fuse to run down and it will go off, seriously affecting the other characters' opinion of you.

It's a tricky matter to gauge just how "sexist" these games are. Obviously the pornographic examples such as *Timestripper* on the PC are shamelessly exploitative. However, in Sega and Red's cult classic *Sakura Wars,* the dating itself is only a part of the game – it's woven into an RPG-style plot with wargame elements which presents us with a huge cast of strong, independent and well-developed (stop it) characters. Sakura, for example, is a noble Samurai with an unholy terror of lightning. Maria, meanwhile, is an exceptional soldier and marksman who suffers from painful memories of the Russian Revolution. The romantic elements of such games, it could be argued, are as harmless as a romantic novel; however, we must still "Defuse" the fact that these games are founded around the principle of a male main character who is surrounded by intelligent, desirable women... and, gameplay allowing, he can have ANY of them. Some of these games are very popular in Japan amongst women – *Sakura Wars* is the single most popular Saturn title of all time bar *Virtua Fighter 2*. The fact remains, though, that import-crazed as certain members of the Total team are, none of us has ever seen a popular dating game which features a nondescript female character surrounded by gorgeous men.

SOME OF THESE GAMES ARE VERY POPULAR IN JAPAN AMONGST WOMEN – SAKURA WARS IS THE SINGLE MOST POPULAR SATURN TITLE OF ALL TIME BAR VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

The next Karate Kids

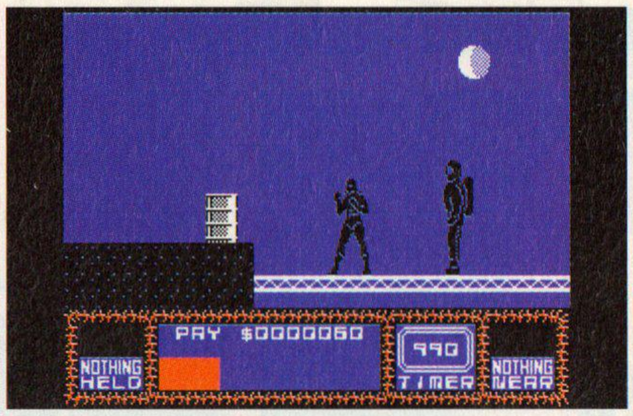
In the meantime, there's something to be said for beat-'em-ups. Actually there's a lot of things, ranging from "Only a fifteen hit combo? You need more practice!" to "I pressed that but nothing happened!" What we're interested in, however, is Miss Chun Li Zhang. The ubiquitous

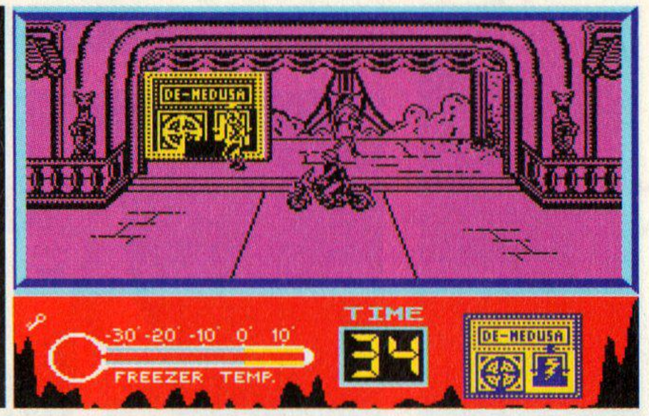




While many beat-'em-ups include female characters purely for titillation, *Tekken 3* treats them with equality. Both Nina and Mei Ling are as good as any of the male fighters







Saboteur and *Rocky Horror*. You could choose to play male or female characters

company have come back with *SFZ3* and *SF3*, featuring kung-fu kittens in fetish clothing and practically no clothing at all respectively!

Since then the situation has improved notably; although *Virtua Fighter*'s Pai and Sarah came first, *Tekken* is probably the most laudable game in this area. *Tekken*'s female characters are not and never have been over-sexualised or exploitative. There's a problem with beat-'em-ups, though. They exist on a different plane to the argument of games being programmed around female values and goals (rather than just reworking the same old stuff with a main character who happens to be female) because they don't follow the same rules. RPGs, adventures and survival horror games follow the Hollywood guidelines – beat-'em-ups have always taken their cues from John Woo movies.

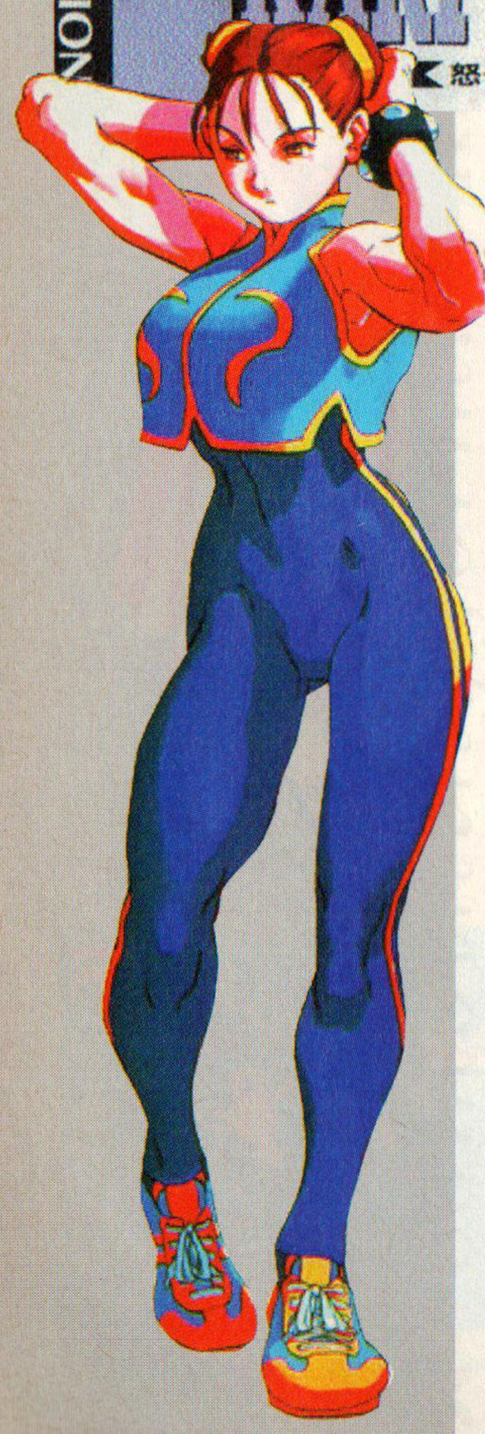
For those who have never seen films like A Better Tomorrow and The Killer, this basically means that women in beat-'em-ups don't get to do things for love because NOBODY in beat-'em-ups tends to do things for love, and even if they do it's for the love of an estranged family member or a fellow warrior in a brotherly, honourable way. Warrior characters run to their own inscrutable schedule which normal mortals are not meant to comprehend – did anyone else out there find it unsatisfying to finish *Street Fighter 2* just to be allowed to watch Ryu skip the winner's ceremony so that he could go and have a cold shower and practice a few Dragon Punches?

(The other problem with beat-'em-ups is that Sega would be exploiting Sarah Bryant for all she were worth if they could convince anyone that she's sexy. But that's by the by…)

The Nude Raider fiasco

Of course, it has to be admitted that Lara Croft is a blatant male fantasy figure. The Nude Raider affair began with a little fan art here and there – Web pages playing host to pictures of Lara in ways that her creators never intended us to see her. Running parallel to this was a wild rumour of a code for the console versions (at this time no PC version existed) that stripped Lara completely and let her run around in her birthday suit. This obviously caught someone's imagination, because before long the fake screenshots to "prove" the

RPGS, ADVENTURES AND SURVIVAL HORROR GAMES FOLLOW THE HOLLYWOOD GUIDELINES – BEAT-'EM-UPS HAVE ALWAYS TAKEN THEIR CUES FROM JOHN WOO MOVIES

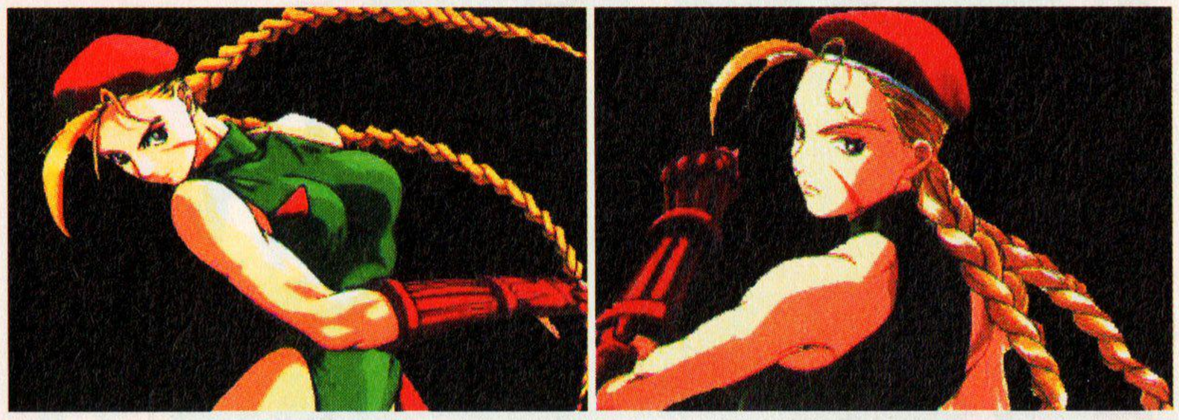


Chunners made gaming history back in 1992 with her silly hair, "Strongest woman in the world" schtick, and her spinning bird show-us-your-arse kick. Until then the most memorable woman in a beat-'em-up was probably the girl in *Double Dragon* who gets punched in the kidneys at the start of *DD1* before being filled full of lead by Williams in *DD2*. Capcom, sadly, have never been one for exploiting the female connection except in the most obvious sense. After Chun Li we were given Cammy in her outfit so tight it revealed every contour of her rear. Rose from *Street Fighter Zero 3* looked like an improvement (an austere, dignified female fighter), but since then the





Good role models? Michelle Chang from *Tekken 2*, and Sigourney Weaver reprising her strong female role in *Aliens* on the Spectrum



Cammy from *Street Fighter*. The reason for her appearance in *SF* is betrayed by her outfit

code's existence were flying. These pictures have even been published in natural magazines (with strategically placed black rectangles) without the writers caring to mention that they were 100% unofficial. It's said that there's no such thing as bad publicity, but nobody could deny Core's gratitude to a large number of pure and chivalrous *Tomb Raider* fans whose efforts led to the fad eventually dying out for the most part. However, the Nude Raider bug is a hardy beast, and an ongoing project to provide cracks and patches which undress Lara in the PC instalments of *Tomb Raider* just will not die.

In the long run, one or two things need to be said in Lara Croft's defence (yeah, like she couldn't defend herself). Yes, she's exploitative – if she weren't then she wouldn't need to be posing with her bum out in the *Tomb Raider III* guidebook, and her fans wouldn't have been clamouring to

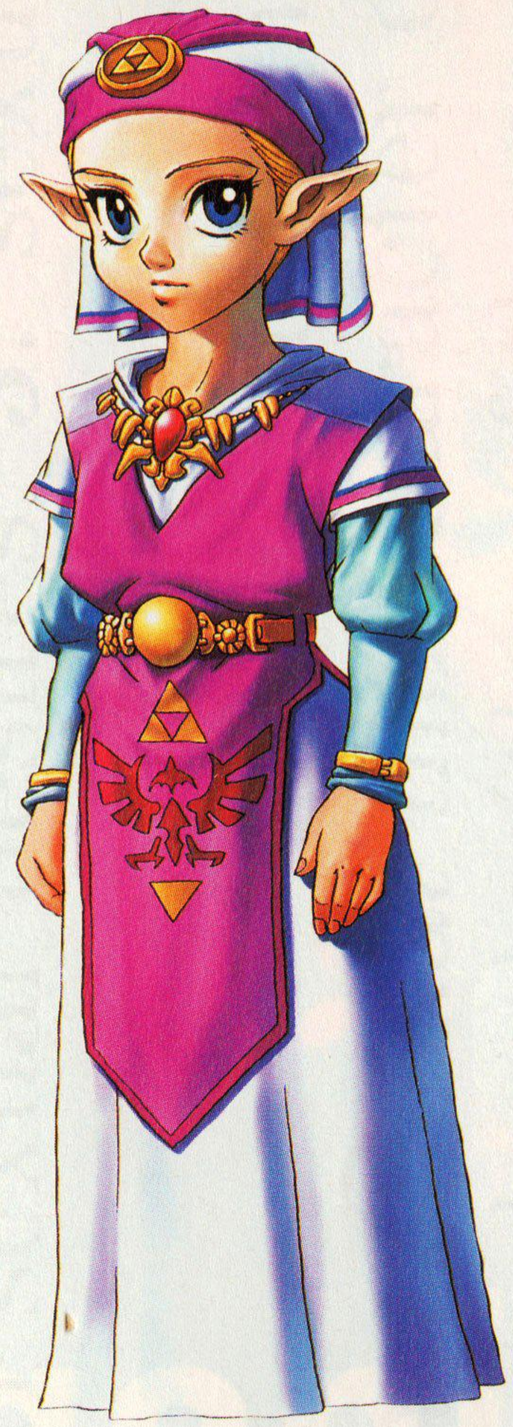
AN ONGOING PROJECT TO PROVIDE CRACKS AND PATCHES WHICH UNDRESS LARA IN THE PC INSTALMENTS OF TOMB RAIDER JUST WILL NOT DIE

auction off the chair in which her real-life counterpart had sat and left a sweat mark (that costume's made of rubber, folks). On the other hand, while it's ridiculous to raise Lara aloft as a totem of feminism, it's equally ridiculous to deny point blank that she doesn't constitute a step forward. It's quite plausible that many of those who laugh and point had better things to do ten years ago when others were tinkering with their Spectrums in a vain attempt to get *Android Two* to load, and therefore don't realise just how far we've come.

The future...

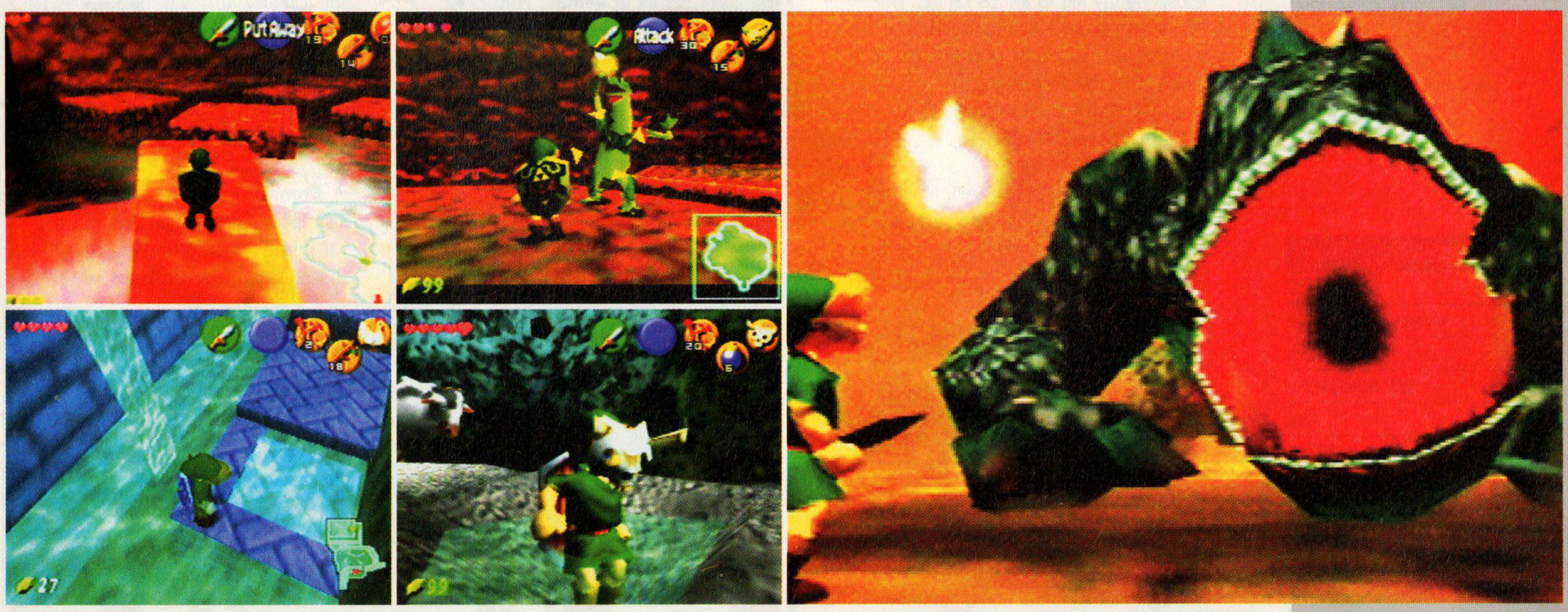
So, is it going to happen? Exactly what happens next depends on the female demographic. It's out there alright, but it needs to be more vocal if it's going to avoid another ten years of being consigned to *Puzzle Bobble* while the blokes go off to shoot zombies and examine nicely rendered derrieres. The potential exists too – can you imagine an advertising campaign for the forthcoming *Tomorrow Never Dies* which attempted to sell the game by getting women to go gooey over Pierce Brosnan in the way that men go loopy over Lara? Hard-core 2D gamers are often heard to scoff at Sony for making video gaming into something mainstream and mass-market, but if the new culture of consoles that has evolved since the PlayStation's launch pulls in ladies that a short while ago wouldn't have been seen dead near a joystick, and that in turn creates a sales area that the mainstream will want to go after, then something genuinely fantastic will have been achieved.

Total CONTROL, of course, welcomes all intelligent and thought-provoking debate on the subject... but anyone who pesters us for those Nude Raider programs will be hunted down. You've been warned. **TC**





Japanese gamers know all about relationships from their dating games



You would not necessarily think of a Nintendo game as being sexist, but why is Princess Zelda always placed in such a submissive role, only for Link to come and rescue her?

Resident Evil 2

The evil may have come and gone on the **PlayStation,** but **PC owners are about to hear their hard-drives scream.**

Last year, *Resident Evil 2* stunned the PlayStation world. Its horrific visuals and disturbing acoustics gave it a John Carpenter type feel, which subsequently led to an 18 rating. The PC version looks set to continue the notoriety of its console counterpart, which, theoretically, is good news for PlayStation owners too – maybe now they'll get some peace...

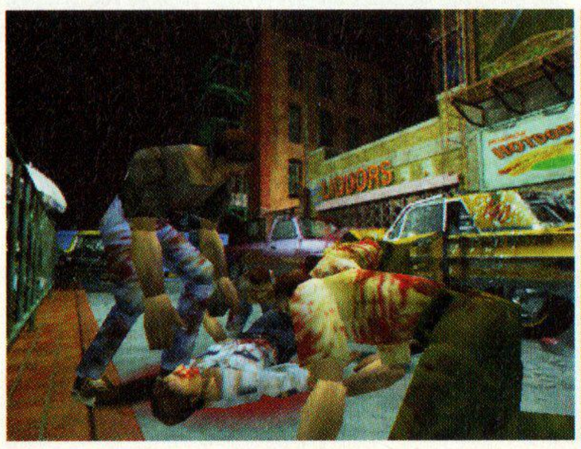
So what of the story? Well, like the PlayStation version, the macabre tale carries on from the original game, as the Umbrella Corporation continue their deplorable bio-experiments with the mutagenic T-Virus. Obviously, being your stereotypical evil scientific bunch of reprobates, they're not really interested in general safety, and so the whole of Racoon City has been transformed into a kind of giant Zombie playpen. New protagonists, Claire and Leon, accidentally wander into this torrent of mutated city folk, and so endeavour to shoot their way through these rasping, moaning hordes while trying to figure out what the hell is going on.

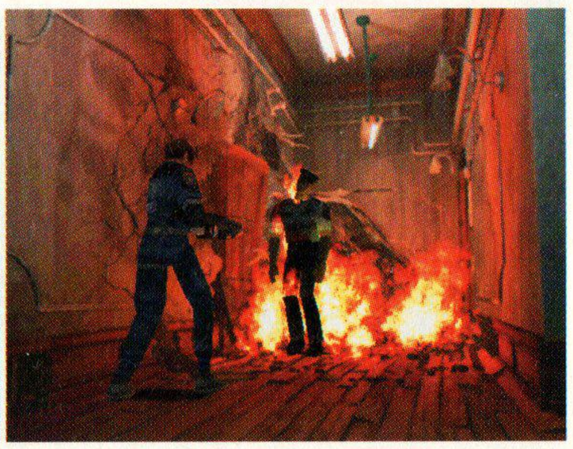
Time for your medicine, Dr Jekyll

The graphics appear to be slightly improved on the PC, and in fact they look very reminiscent of the *Alone in the Dark* series of games. Naturally, the PC version looks far more impressive than the blocky PlayStation effort, and that's to be expected, although if you are planning on running *RE2* without a 'poke-your-eyes-out' 3Dfx card, you can expect more of a 'Station type resolution. But Capcom are upbeat nonetheless, and are aiming for identical gaming experiences whether your PC is accelerated or not. Clearly, this will be impossible, but in terms of actual gameplay it's looking hopeful.

THE MACABRE TALE CARRIES ON FROM THE ORIGINAL GAME, AS THE UMBRELLA CORPORATION CONTINUE THEIR DEPLORABLE BIO-EXPERIMENTS

Enmeshed in the proceedings are a series of simple puzzles, so it's not just a case of running forward and shooting the testicles off every

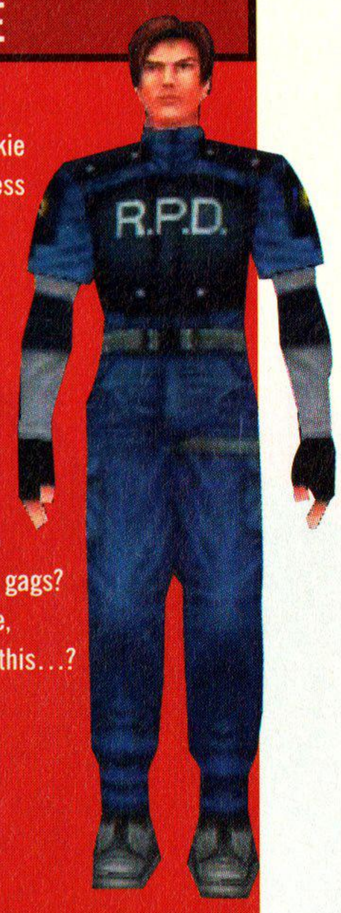




If it's not zombies eating your mates, it's helicopters crashing into walls behind you

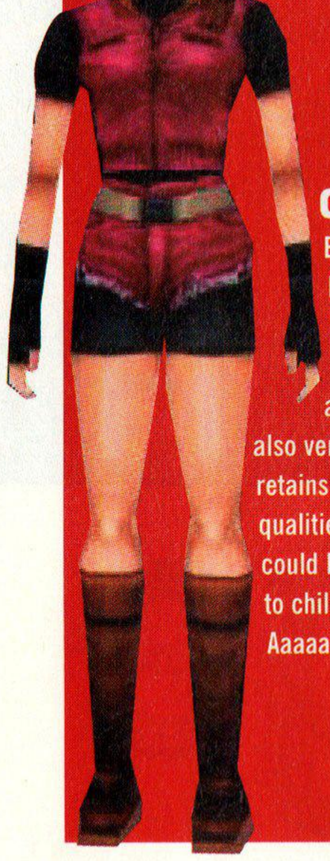
INFORMATION	
FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Virgin Interactive
DEVELOPER	Capcom
STYLE	3D Adventure
RELEASE	Feb
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	One
PROCESSOR	P166 P200
MEMORY	24MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	550MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

ALL YOU GOOD, GOOD PEOPLE



Leon

Leon is the naive rookie cop. He can be reckless and brash, but his sense of humour makes him a very likeable officer down at the nick. It's a shame then that all his colleagues have been turned into mush. Who's going to listen to his hilarious gags? Hold on a minute, who's this...?



Claire

Born with a plum in her mouth, this articulate, modern woman is intelligent and optimistic. She is also very attractive and retains very feminine qualities. (Wonder what they could be?) She is also kind to children and animals. Aaaaah... That's nice!









mutant you see. At some points you will need to find pass cards to go through locked doors, and you even have to find an ink-ribbon to use a typewriter in order to save the game. Hmmm... nothing's easy in Racoon City, especially when bullets are in short supply and most of them are guarded by slavering ex-policeman (or are they just part of the London Met?) in the city's shattered Police Headquarters.

Considering that most of your time is spent running around like a chimp being chased by a Chipperfield, the control interface has to be accurate. On the PlayStation it couldn't have been simpler – there were circles, squares, triangles, and crosses to help us along. Thankfully the PC has adopted a similar ergonomically friendly control method. Apart from the direction keys, you have a run key, shoot key, and action key. Pressing the action button performs a range of moves including opening doors, running up or down stairs, and searching an area. It's an interface that has been specifically designed for ease of use, and one that will hopefully ensure that the smooth, film-like sense of 'being there' remains intact.

One other notable feature hoping to make this frightener stand out from the crowd is the separate CD for each character. At the start of the game a brief intro introduces us to Leon (The Zombie Farmer) and Claire (slightly rounder norks than Lara) and then, depending on who you play as, the game goes off in two totally separate directions. Basically *RE2* contains two quests, so as far as value for money and longevity goes, it shouldn't be found wanting.

Sound city

The final mention has to go to the sound. If you're one of these lucky people that have their PC rigged up to some kind of super woofer, kick-ass sound system, you, my friends, are in for a very torrid time. The sickening moans and cries of the mutants, plus stunning orchestral sound effects, creates an awesome atmosphere throughout the whole experience. Make sure your washing machine's free because your underpants are going straight in.

So, it all looks and sounds pretty darn good really. All we have to do now is wait. But it won't be for long – the evil is close – closer than you think... **TC**

Do you reach for your shotgun or your fire extinguisher? Life as a member of S.T.A.R.S. is full of decisions

SUMMING UP

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- Totally immersive and scary environment. Should hopefully be the closest thing yet to a horror film on the PC.

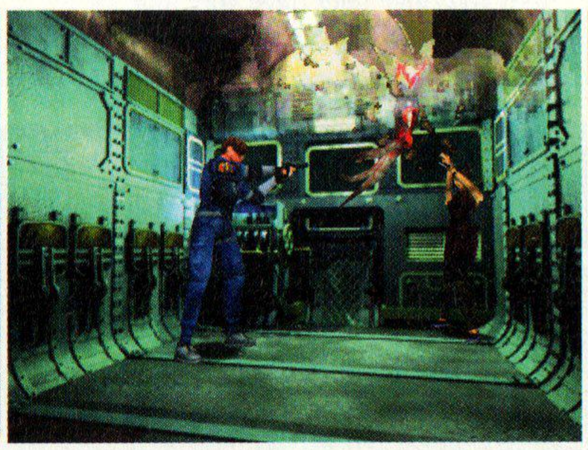
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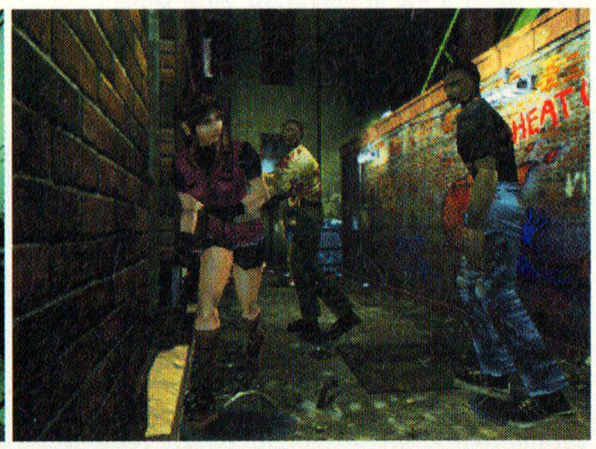
- Shooting wave after wave of zombies is not everybody's idea of fulfilling gameplay.

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If you enjoyed the PlayStation version, you will undoubtedly enjoy the PC version just as much.







***Resident** Evil 2*'s camera angles are occasionally obtrusive, constantly changing, and always, but always, cinematic

Rollcage

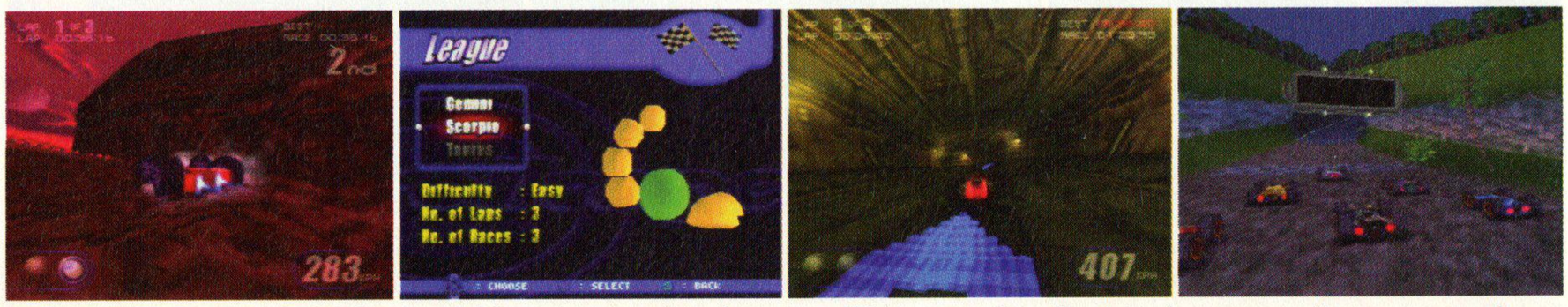
Psygnosis have been **fairly quiet** over the last few years, but there are **several great-looking titles** in development. **Might *Rollcage* be** a sign of good things to come?

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Psygnosis
DEVELOPER	Attention to Detail
STYLE	Futuristic Racing
RELEASE	March
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-2
ANALOGUE	Yes
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block

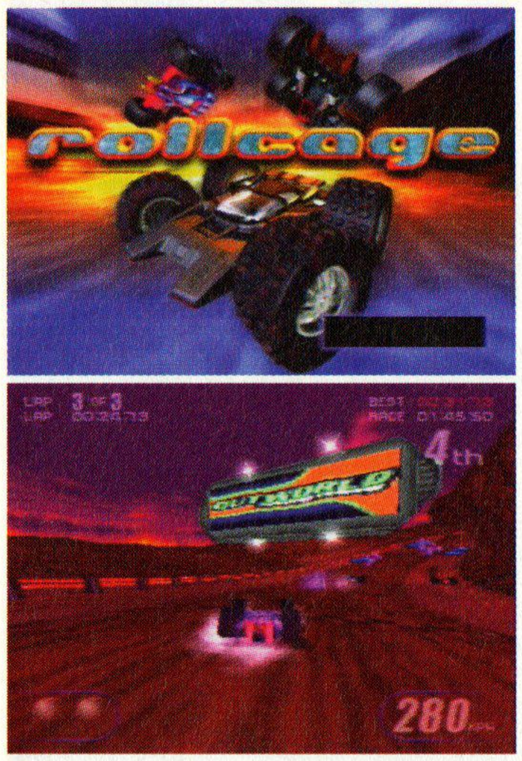
Psygnosis are one of the veteran names in the computer games industry. However, their back catalogue stands as a testament to the high and low points of their colourful past. The *WipEout* series on PlayStation, PC and N64, has been the most successful in their history, and it's not hard to see why. *Rollcage* does have a lot in common with that game on paper; the graphics are absolutely gorgeous and incredibly fast and smooth, you drive a futuristic vehicle, and with the help of speed boosts and weapon power-ups you engage in a hectic race to the finish.

Anti-gravity

The game itself plays very differently to Psygnosis' aforementioned classic for one very big reason. The futuristic cars that you drive here have very little in common with almost every game you might try to compare it to; they are capable of scaling the surrounding walls, and even travelling upside down if you are going fast enough. If you don't manage to pick up enough speed beforehand you could lose your grip, but because of the design of the cars, if you fall and happen to flip over through 180° you can continue to drive upside down with no difference to the handling. The only problem with the versatility of the cars is that it can sometimes become difficult to tell the front of the



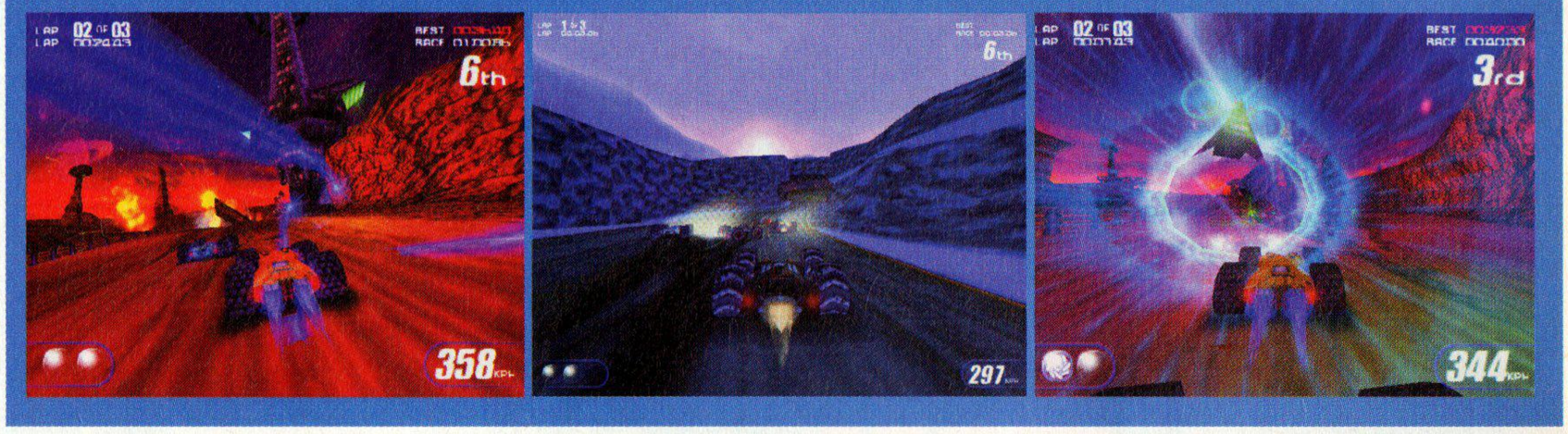
Every league is built up of 3-4 races, with each race taken from one of four scenarios. The later leagues are the more complex



The starts can be predictably hectic

PICKING UP THE PC

Having been fortunate enough to have played both the PC and PlayStation versions, we can tell you the differences between the two are purely aesthetic. The PlayStation version looks very good, but it is absolutely gorgeous when played on a high spec PC. You also notice a distinct increase in speed which makes it all the more hectic and a lot more fun. *Rollcage* is shaping up to be a very good PlayStation game, but it will almost certainly be a must-buy for all owners of a kick-ass PC.



car from the rear. This idea gives rise to some very well-designed maps featuring tunnels with speed boosts on the ceiling and moving trains that will hit you head on if you stay flat on the ground. It works fantastically, although you do need to spend a fair bit of time getting used to it. Obvious problems could be associated with the camera which follows your car as you spiral around the roof of a tunnel – it can get a bit disorientating at times, but it looks great if you manage pull it off properly.

With the speed of the race being as high as it is, crashes are frequent occurrences, but the cars have no damage scale and remain unaffected by this. With regard to the style of game, health meters would have been a poor choice for *Rollcage*, particularly as crashes are sometimes beneficial to your race effort. Many of the buildings have noticeable supporting structures along the outside – by steering your car in their general direction they can be removed, sending the building crashing down on the chasing pack. Weapons can also be found that can be fired only at buildings, and although the speed of the game prevents it from becoming too strategic, the atmosphere it creates is incredible. Not only must you concentrate on avoiding enemy cars and their missiles and stay on the road, but you also need to avoid falling debris from gun fights up ahead. With so much happening on screen this is a fabulous technical feat, and it is achieved at a speed that builds up to reveal an enormously tense and hectic racing game.

Silicon minds

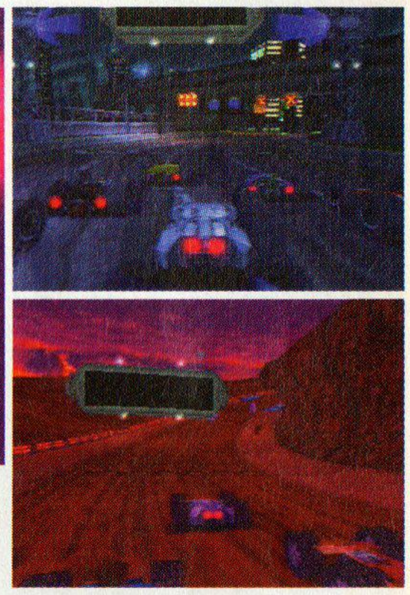
In other futuristic racers the AI has never been notably impressive, with most having an opposition that follows what seems like an almost pre-determined course. *Rollcage* is perhaps the first game that has really made me feel that there is an aura of individuality about the other cars. This is something that is not so much due to the fact that they all actually have their own specific AI, it's just nice to see a CPU car making a ridiculous error, misjudging corners, landing badly, using a speed boost which sends them skidding into an explosive building etc, etc. That's not to say that the AI is bad, though. True, the easy option on our preview CD was completed in under an hour, but it soon becomes more challenging very quickly, and it's not because of the lack of CPU errors, it's more to do with them having an identical speed to you; if they make no errors and neither do you, the car that wins will be the one with the predetermined highest speed, chosen before the race.

ROLLCAGE IS PERHAPS THE FIRST GAME THAT HAS REALLY MADE ME FEEL THERE IS AN AURA OF INDIVIDUALITY ABOUT THE OTHER CARS

There are six vehicles to choose from, and the differences between are significant. The handling of your car is hugely important and is perhaps the only part of the game that I would want changed for the final version. Because of the varied terrain, (concrete, mud, grass etc.) and the presumably intended accuracy of the cars' steering, moving from one terrain to another can send your vehicle flying through the air at the wrong angle. It's also far too easy to get into a skid, and too time consuming to get out of one. On the hard setting (and much like *WipEout*) you cannot afford to make more than a few minor mistakes if you are going to win. This increases the game life immensely and is something that I would want to keep in. But with this difficulty following straight on from the easy setting, the addition of a medium difficulty mode would improve the learning curve to perfection.

The code sent down seemed to be very close to a final version, and even as it is this would probably be a very high scoring game, but if Psygnosis pull out the stops and make a few minor adjustments before its release, *Rollcage* could turn out to be something really special. **TC**





The lighting effects are very nice for the PlayStation, and the game has a very long draw distance

SUMMING UP

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- Gorgeous graphics, achieved at a blisteringly high speed and frame rate – a remarkable technical feat for the PlayStation.
- Very tense, hectic gameplay – there's always so much happening on screen.

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- The difficulty curve seems a bit unbalanced.
- At odd points throughout the game the handling of the cars can become extremely frustrating.

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A stunning futuristic racing game that combines the best elements from the competition and builds upon them significantly.

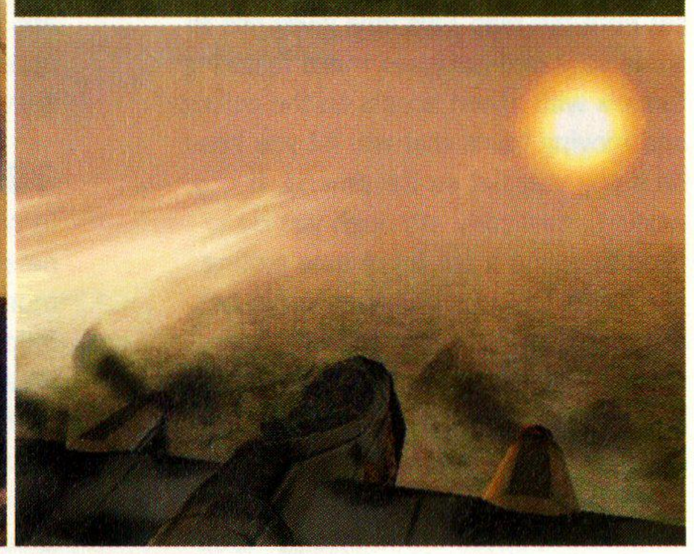


Choosing your character on the hard setting is very important, not just because of who you are, but because of who you are racing









Hidden & Dangerous

Set in World War II, this **complex 3D strategy** game from **Czech developers** Illusion Softworks should test your **skills to the limit**.

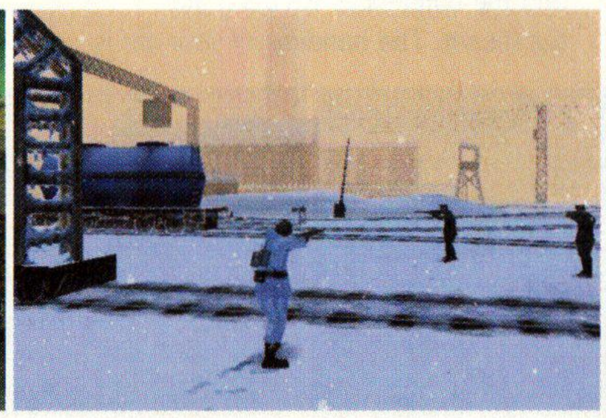
INFORMATION	
FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Take 2 Interactive
DEVELOPER	Illusion Softworks
STYLE	Action/Strategy
RELEASE	May
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-4
PROCESSOR	P233 P350
MEMORY	16MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	TBA
3D ACCELERATOR	Required

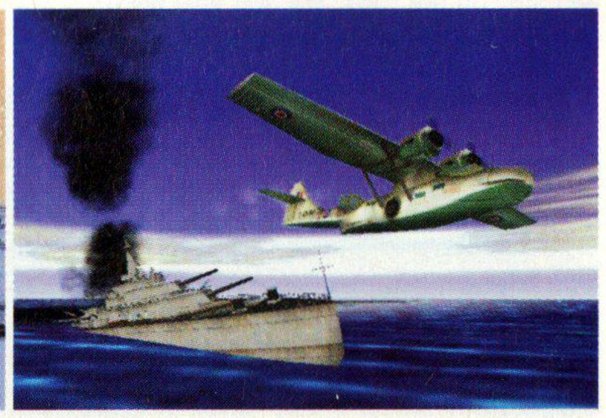
Hidden & Dangerous is the name of the game, and it's also a good description of the characters that you play in it. This innovative and ambitious project, from the little-known Czech Republic development house Illusion Softworks, seeks to recreate in accurate detail and realistic 3D the missions of behind-the-lines commandos during World War II. In general style the game can be thought of as a cross between the tactics of Eidos's *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* and the graphics of Red Storm's *Rainbow Six*, but upon closer inspection *Hidden & Dangerous* is very different from both of these titles.

Programmed for adventure

Hidden & Dangerous uses a cleverly designed interface to enable the player to control a team of four commandos in real-time and co-ordinate their actions so that complex and carefully timed missions are possible. The interface includes







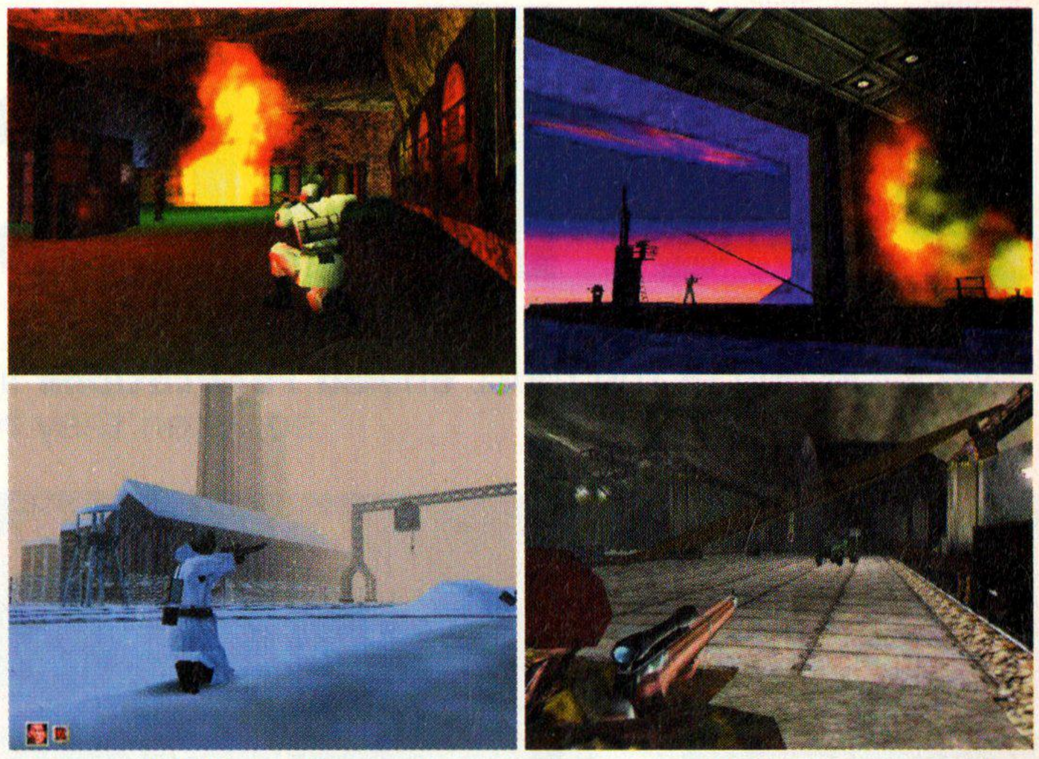
The Czech and Slovak republics have been on the receiving end of two world wars, so I guess they'd know all about the subject

ILLUSION SOFTWORKS: WHO AND WHERE?

Illusion Softworks was founded in 1993 by Petr Vochozka, and at first just published games by Czech programmers. They moved on to import and translate games from outside the republic and to develop their own titles. In 1997 the company underwent a major re-organisation, including a massive investment from the Cash Reform Group, which guarantees them virtually unlimited funding, as well as the support of experienced business managers.

From this fortunate position, they now concentrate entirely on the development of new games for the global market. They have twenty programmers working in several development teams, including some of the best programmers in the Czech and Slovak Republics. They have developed their own 3D engine, which is used in *Hidden & Dangerous*, and are planning to develop games for the Sega Dreamcast console.





The powerful 3D graphics engine was written specially for this game and contains many advanced features not found anywhere else



World War II vehicles and buildings are modelled with a high degree of accuracy and realism

THERE ARE SIX SEPARATE SCENARIOS SET IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS, ALL BASED ON ACTIONS WHICH EITHER ACTUALLY HAPPENED OR WERE PLANNED AS COMMANDO MISSIONS DURING THE WAR

an innovative and easy-to-use action sequencer, somewhat similar to the MIDI sequencers used by musicians, which is used by the player to program the actions of the team. They can be ordered to move to locations on a map, guard areas, attack targets and defend themselves, and the sequencer ensures that all their movements are co-ordinated in line with the tactical plan necessary to complete each mission. Of course it is possible for the player to control each commando individually, jumping into either a first or third-person view of each character as they move through the 3D environment. The game is not simply a 3D action game. It has strong elements of stealth and tactical planning, and the advanced enemy AI means missions will always be a challenge.

On the level

The graphics engine powering the game has been specially developed by Illusion Softworks for this game and includes all of the standard features found in other 3D action games such as *Quake II* or *Half-Life*, as well as many unique points of its own. The extremely large level maps on which the action takes place are complex and multi-layered, including buildings, tunnels, realistic trees and undergrowth, and driveable vehicles. The draw range (the apparent distance from the viewpoint to the limits of visibility) is especially impressive, and is superior to many other games on the market. Special graphical effects include realistic water, particle system smoke and steam, and weather effects such as genuine three-dimensional rain and volumetric mist. The technique they have developed for fire and explosions is particularly spectacular. The overall effect is to create a realistic and immersive environment which draws you into the tense atmosphere of the missions.

Getting it right

Of course, the best graphics engine in the world would be wasted if the gameplay was inadequate, but as much effort has been put into designing the missions as into programming the game. The twenty-five missions in *Hidden & Dangerous* have been written to give the game a series of contiguous storylines in which one mission leads on from the next. There are six separate scenarios set in different locations, all based on actions which either actually happened or were planned as commando missions during the war. The developers have spent many hours on exhaustive research, talking to veterans and historians to make sure that the details of the game are accurate, from the weapons and vehicles of the period right down to the insignia on the uniforms.

Stealing in

One of the main challenges of the game will be trying to outwit the AI programming of the enemy soldiers. They all have realistic fields of view which are affected by such factors as searchlight beams and even reflections in other surfaces. Sounds can also give you away, so you will have to be careful to move as quietly as possible. In this manner the game is somewhat similar to the superb *Thief: The Dark Project* from Eidos. Once alerted to your presence, the enemies will react in a realistic manner, sounding the alarm and attacking, and generally making your life as miserable and as short as possible. It seems that 'stealth' is becoming a new buzzword amongst games developers, and from what we have seen so far, *Hidden & Dangerous* is a fine example of how well this can be implemented.

Dream of it

The extensive range of features sported by this game are rounded off with a selection of multiplayer options. Four players can take control of a commando each and take part in missions together. It was not made clear to me just how players would co-ordinate their actions as completely as the movement sequencer in the single player game, but the possibilities are interesting. Perhaps a system of pre-set messages on hot keys?

There is also a suggestion that the game may be adapted for the Dreamcast console, in which case the multiplayer options, with four players on one screen, would make rather more sense. *Hidden & Dangerous* is due for release in late April or early May, and should prove to be a big hit. **TC**



SUMMING UP

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- **Many original features, historically realistic, terrific graphics, and extremely challenging gameplay.**

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- **Very high minimum systems requirements and 3D card needed to play.**

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A very interesting and ambitious project from an unusual source.

Jet Force Gemini

Rare have one of the most **envied reputations** in the industry, so when they **release a new game**, everyone sits up and **takes notice...**

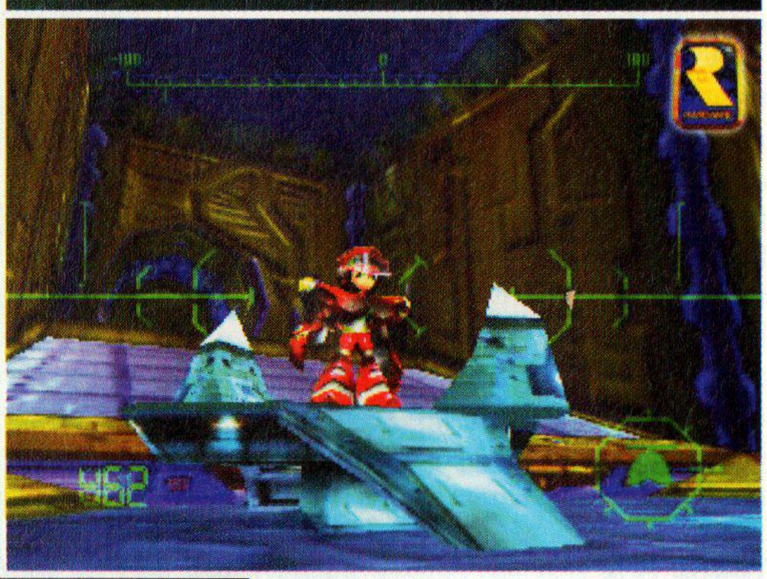




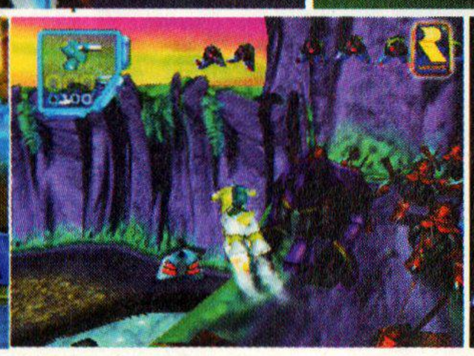














***Jet** Force Gemini* pits your wits and your trigger finger against the evil tyrant Mizar and his evil Insectoids in an epic adventure over many different worlds. Help Juno, Vela and Lupus save the entire galaxy from interstellar war

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	Nintendo
DEVELOPER	Rare
STYLE	RPG
RELEASE	May
PRICE	£TBA
PLAYERS	1-4
RUMBLE PAK	TBA
MEMORY PAK	TBA
EXPANSION PAK	TBA

If you were to name the best five games available for the Nintendo 64, I would bet you a modest sum that at least three of them would be developed by Rare. With titles like *Blast Corps*, *Diddy Kong Racing*, *Banjo-Kazooie*, and of course the brilliant *Goldeneye*, Rare have done more for the popularity of the N64 than anyone except Mario himself. They have a list of great games lined up for release this year, including *Twelve Tales: Conker 64*, *Conker's Pocket Tales* for the Game Boy, and the eagerly awaited *Goldeneye* follow-up *Perfect Dark*, but first on the release schedule for 1999 is a stunning new action/RPG adventure called *Jet Force Gemini*. A video loop of an early version of the game was unveiled at the E3 show in Atlanta last May, and caused a sensation. Press comments were enthusiastic, with some people describing it as the best game they had ever seen.

Heroes and villains

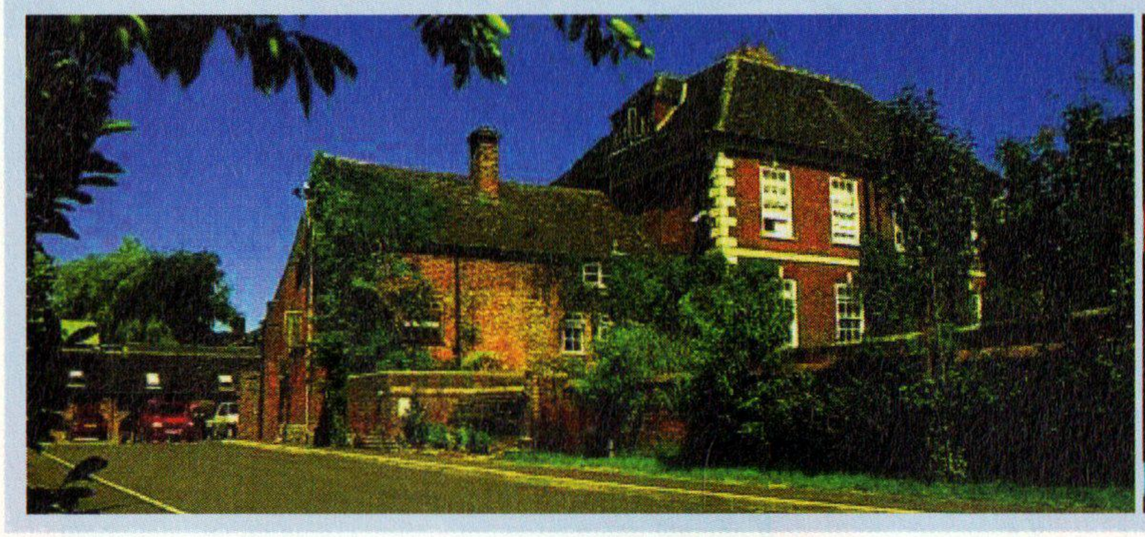
The storyline is classic space-opera, and could almost start with 'A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...'

The evil tyrant Mizar and his alien insectoid hordes are sweeping through space like a plague, blasting from system to system and conquering new worlds by the day. Watching the unfolding tragedy from their headquarters in a nearby galaxy (I love the idea of another galaxy being 'nearby'!) are the *Jet Force Gemini* team of Juno and Vela, and their faithful dog, Lupus. Naturally they are worried about the approaching interstellar war, but their warnings to the authorities in their own galaxy go unheeded. Finally, when their own friends and allies are captured and enslaved, our three heroes decide to take matters into their own hands, and set off on the adventure of a lifetime, determined to destroy the evil tyrant and liberate the entire galaxy. Now that's what I call an ambitious mission!

RARE OCCASIONS

It's always refreshing to see a British company doing well in an international market, but few success stories can match Rare, the software company behind some of the best titles on the Nintendo 64 console. Based in a beautiful country farmhouse near Twycross in Staffordshire, they have been an independent developer since 1986. They began creating games for the N64 in 1996 with a conversion of *KI Gold*. In 1997 they released a trio of brilliant games which made their name, specifically *Blast Corps*, *Goldeneye 007*, and *Diddy Kong Racing*. 1998 saw the appearance of the highly acclaimed *Banjo-Kazooie*, and this year they look set to repeat that success with *Jet Force Gemini*, the provisionally titled *Twelve Tales: Conker 64*, and *Perfect Dark*, a keenly anticipated game from the team responsible for *Goldeneye 007*.

Last year Rare won the new BAFTA Interactive Entertainment Award for developer of the year, and *Goldeneye 007* won the best game award. With the forthcoming titles due out this year, they could be set to repeat this performance again.





Upon reflection

Jet Force Gemini combines the styles of a space-blasting shoot-'em-up and a multi-character role-playing and puzzle-solving game, with stunning 3D environments the like of which have never before been seen on the N64. Newly developed graphics techniques will enable the game to feature real-time sourced lighting effects and realistic dynamic reflections in surfaces like water and glass. In combat, the heroes have a vast arsenal of spectacular weapons, each with its own awesome special effects, such as massive shockwave explosions.

THREE HEROES DECIDE TO TAKE MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS, AND SET OFF ON THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME, DETERMINED TO DESTROY THE EVIL TYRANT

To give you some idea of what to expect, the stunning screenshots on these pages are all taken in-game. As you can see, the artistic design is well up to Rare's usual high standards. The level design, as well, bears the Rare hallmark of quality. This will not just be another game of 'shoot the bad guy, find the key, open the door'. Instead there are cleverly designed puzzles and obstacles to challenge the player, involving highly advanced artificial intelligence programming to make the enemies as realistic as possible.

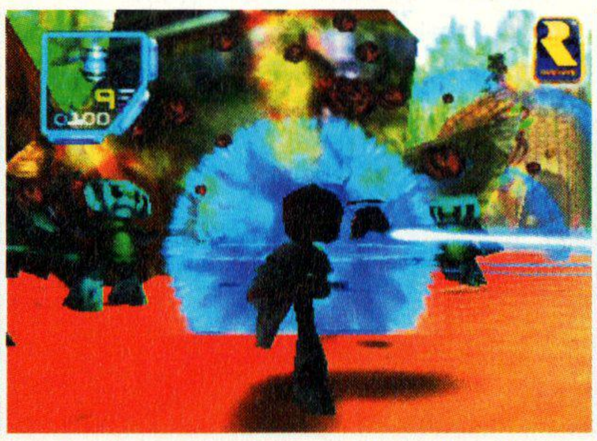
You've got character

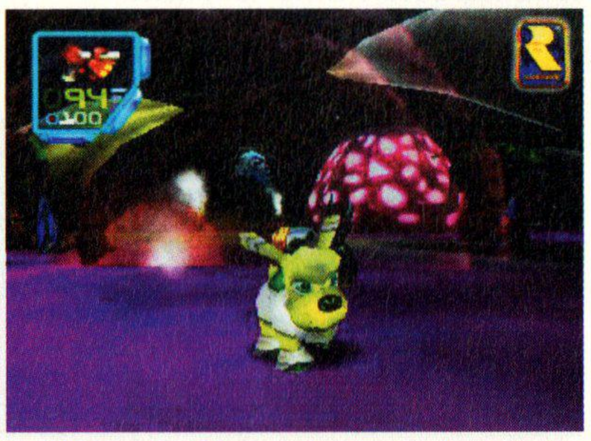
The game is spread over many different environments on many different worlds, following Juno, Vela and Lupus' quest to find Mizar's lair and confront him. All three characters will have different abilities, and the huge levels are designed in such a way that one character alone cannot solve them. To get through you have to jump from one character to the next, so that even Lupus the dog gets to be a hero. In fact, with his rocket-powered flying boots and a battery of weapons to match either of his companions, he is a mutt to be reckoned with. There is also another character called Floyd the Droid, who follows our heroes around offering helpful advice, but who can also be played as a character in some levels, and by a second player in the special two-player co-operative mode. *Jet Force Gemini* will have several multiplayer modes, the details of which are being kept secret at the moment, but you can bet they will be something special. There will also be many secret bonus levels and hidden characters to find along the way, including at least one visitor from another popular Rare game...

Blast to the top

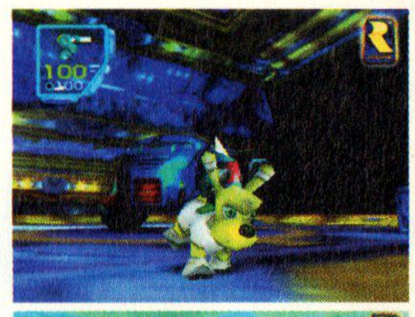
With Rare's reputation for the highest quality games, and the undoubted graphical capabilities of the N64 console, *Jet Force Gemini* promises to be a stunning game. There is currently a gap in the Nintendo line-up for a really good purpose-built alien blasting action game, and this one fits the bill with precision. With multiple characters, challenging puzzles and superb graphics, it could prove to be one of the best games ever released on the N64. It won't be in the shops for about another three months yet, but we here at Total CONTROL will be counting the days. **TC**



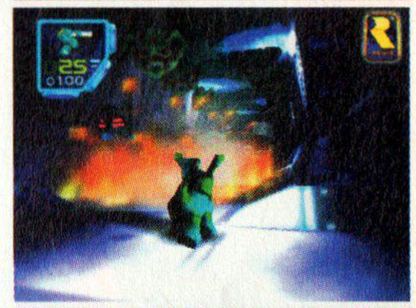




The amazing lighting effects programmed into *Jet Force Gemini* push the technology of the Nintendo 64 console to new heights













There are many different characters to play in *Jet Force Gemini*, some of whom are secrets even we don't know about

SUMMING UP

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- **Stunning visuals, great soundtrack and brilliant gameplay – everything we have come to expect from the maestros of Rare**

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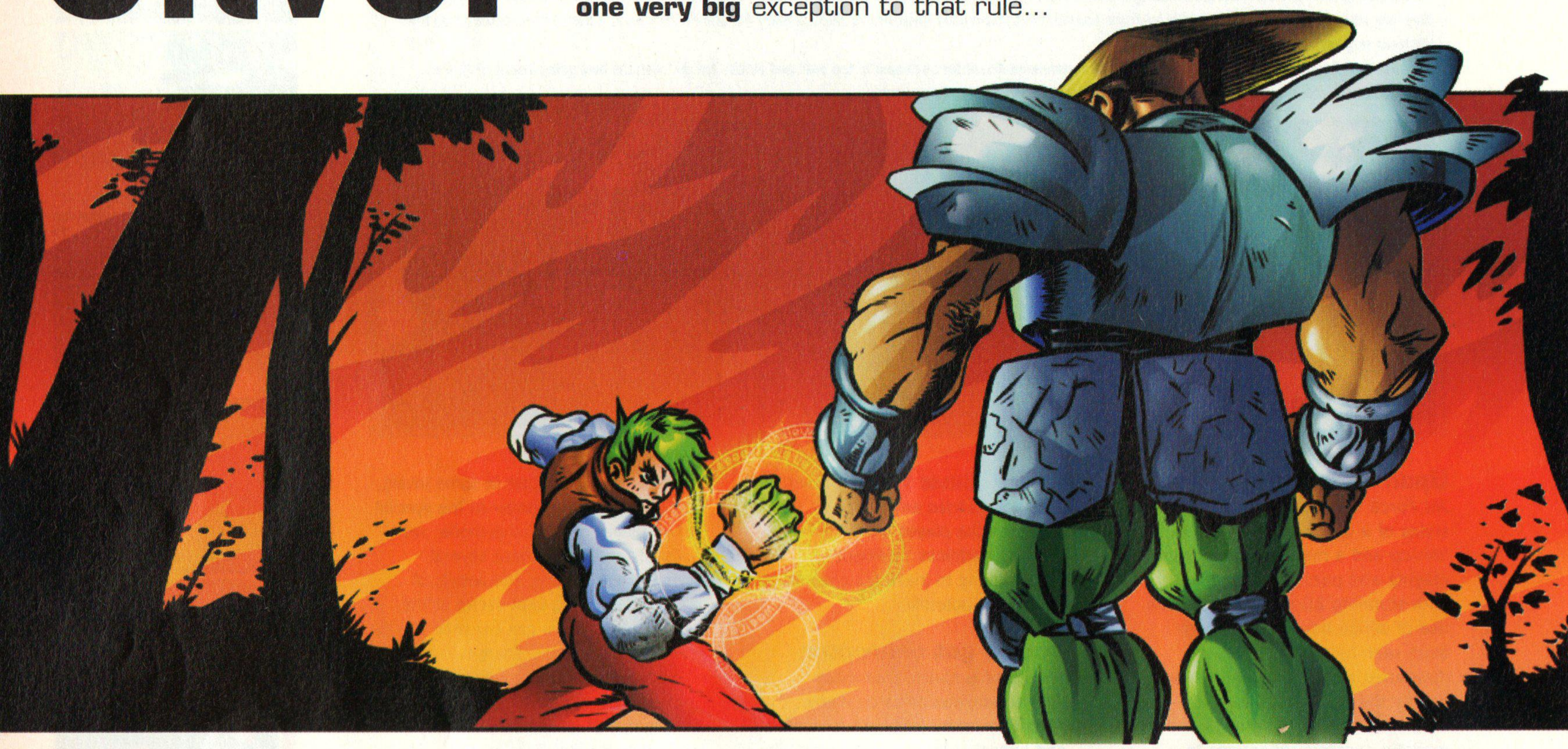
- **A minus point in a Rare game? You're kidding, aren't you?**

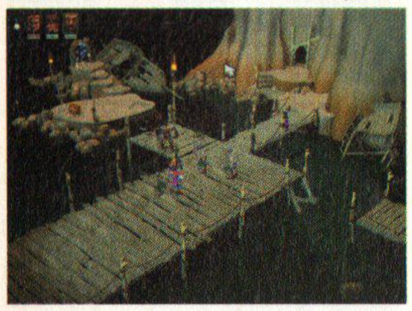
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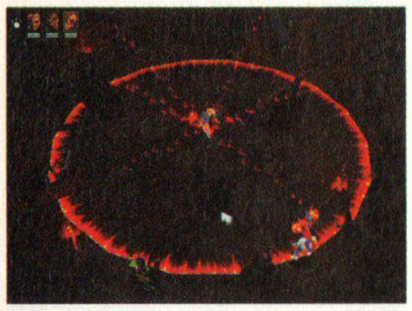
Could be the best game of the year – until *Perfect Dark* comes along, anyway.

Silver

The majority of **today's biggest RPGs** seem to **originate** on the **consoles**, but **Infogrames** are currently finishing **one very big** exception to that rule...







INFORMATION

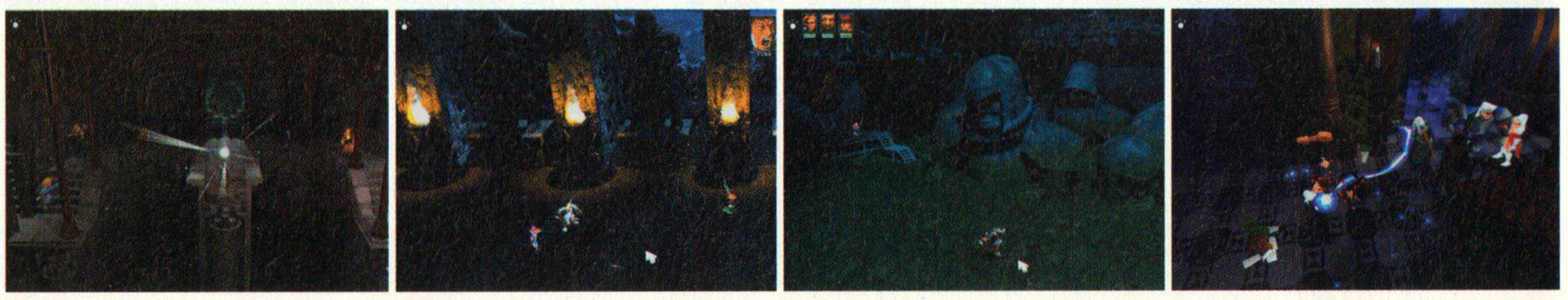
FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Infogrames
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	RPG
RELEASE	March
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	One
PROCESSOR	P166
MEMORY	32MB
DISK SPACE	TBA
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

The RPGs of old were traditionally themed around the idea of Dungeons and Dragons, but since *Final Fantasy VII* things have changed a bit. Recently RPGs have found themselves revelling in and around the sci-fi setting; the power of technology versus the power of the mind – that sort of thing. The new look, pre-rendered background has proved to have far more universal appeal than the usually bland isometric look.

Infogrames are getting close to launching what will surely be one of their biggest games of 1999: *Silver*. Taking inspiration from both old and new RPG schools, *Silver* is the PC's answer to *Final Fantasy VIII,* and it looks like Square could have much more competition on their hands than they might have first imagined.

Shine on

Set in the magical world of Jarrah, *Silver* takes its name from the main enemy in the story. You play David, a budding young warrior who sets out on an epic search for his wife, kidnapped along with the other women from his village by Silver, a powerful and evil sorcerer looking for a suitable spouse. As with all the best RPGs, the team behind the game have no intention of revealing too much of the plot before you've even begun, but a rich and gloriously epic story has been promised. The team has obviously studied *Final Fantasy VII* – both titles share a lot in common. The game is played by moving through a series of pre-rendered scenes, fighting the occasional enemies, and engaging in stimulation conversation with the many eccentric people you meet on your travels. Any RPG worth its name needs to have some element of magic in there somewhere, and *Silver* is no exception. Much like *FFVII*, magic is divided up into elements (fire, ice, water etc.), and as you progress through the game each increases in strength, and also in extravagance. Some of the people you meet may want to follow you for a variety of reasons – up to seven can join your team, although only three will be on hand at any one time. Understandably, the game must be sounding more and more like Square's record selling game, but it is at this point in the preview that the differences become apparent. Luckily (or unluckily for some) they are significant enough to make the two games very different.



The characters are usually very small, which makes the environments appear to be much more spacious than those in similar games



SUMMING UP

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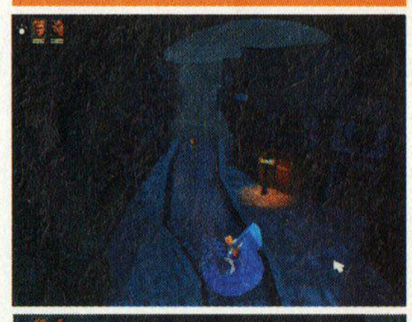
- Very nice pre-rendered backdrops and great animation and effects achieved without the need for 3D acceleration or ridiculously high processor speeds.
- Real-time combat and a very easy-to-use control system.

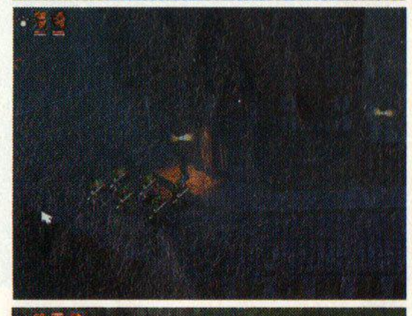
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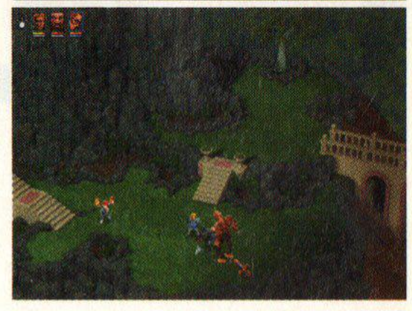
- May not appeal to the more traditional PC RPG fans.
- Accessing the inventory in real-time is frustrating when in battles.

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This style of RPG has not done so well on the PC, but if any title can, *Silver* will be the one.







Silver surfer

Many of the RPGs that have followed *FFVII* have moved away from its combat system, often adopting a semi-real-time mode instead. *Silver* uses a completely real-time combat system, which changes the whole style of the game to such a point that any other similarities it shares with other RPGs are barely evident at all. The whole game is played using only two mouse keys and the Ctrl button on the keyboard – when holding Ctrl, the left and right buttons become associated with attack and defence moves. Holding one and then moving the mouse in a particular direction will perform a certain move (forward to stab, side to swipe etc.), making combat suddenly seem far more involving, yet it is this defining twist to the game that could place it in danger.

WHETHER OR NOT YOU TREAT THIS AS A PURE RPG OR AN ACTION HYBRID, IT IS STILL A SUPERB GAME – SIMPLE TO USE, EASY TO PLAY, AND HIGHLY ENTERTAINING

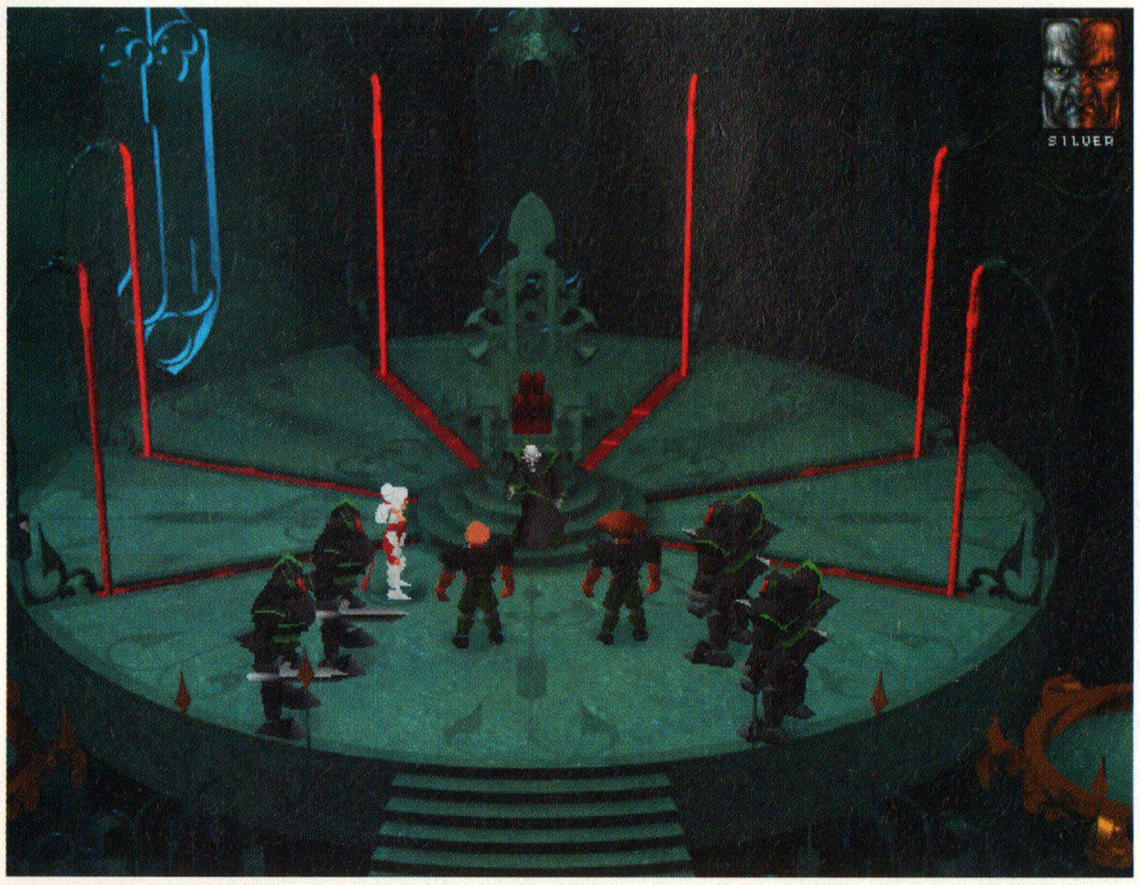
Die-hard RPG fans would argue the RPG combat should be determined by statistics rather than reactions and player's skill. It's a difficult call to make, but whether or not you treat this as a pure RPG or an action hybrid, it is still a superb game – simple to use, easy to play, and highly entertaining.

All of the conversations in *Silver* are carried out using speech, which is a very impressive feat considering the size of the game. Coming on only two CDs, the promise of at least 40 hours completion time for those who know exactly what to do should come as a relief – there is a lot of game here.

It's been squeezed onto the two CDs by avoiding the use of space-absorbing FMV. The cut scenes in *Silver* are performed in real-time in a style similar to the old point and click adventures. They may not be as graphically impressive as those in similar games, but it's the story that counts, right?

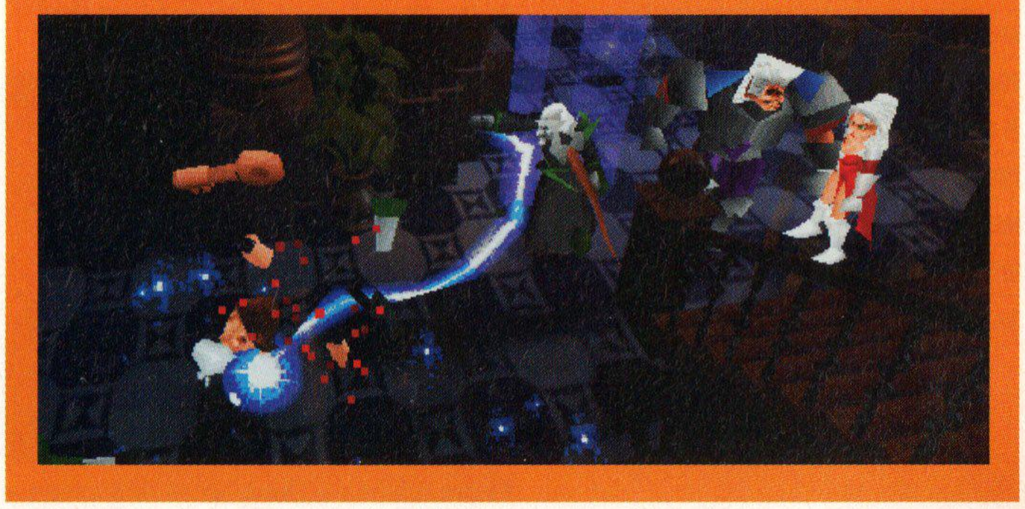
Silver is shaping up to be one of THE games to own on the PC during 1999. The telling point of any RPG is in the story, however, and over the next month we'll be uncovering as much of it as possible before our full review. **TC**

You can take control over a different character at any time



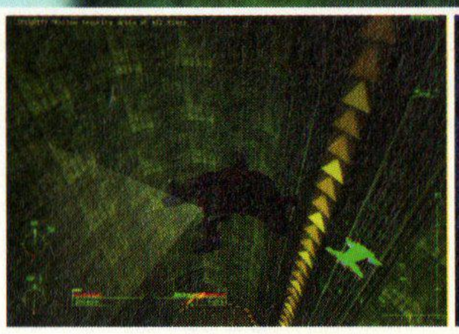
MATERIAL THINGS

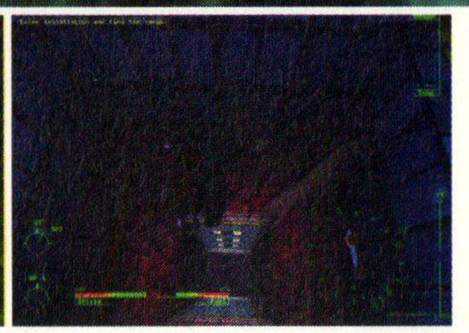
Silver boasts perhaps the most polished of all game engines in the RPG genre. Take the following as an example: Firing an arrow past an enemy into a wooden door will result in it sticking firmly into the door. Hit a concrete post and it bounces back, or a stone floor and it slides along for a while before coming to a halt. Things like these may not make a game, but they help make a game become an experience, which is a good thing in our book.





Lander

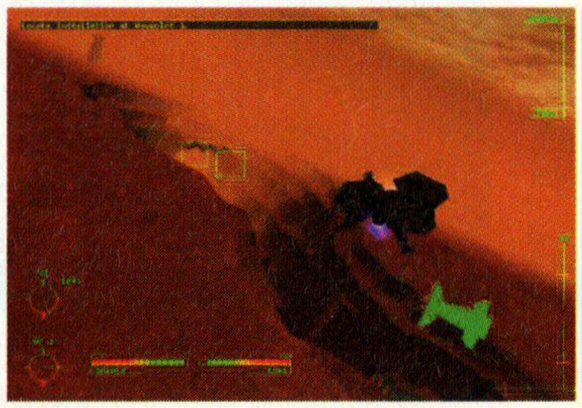


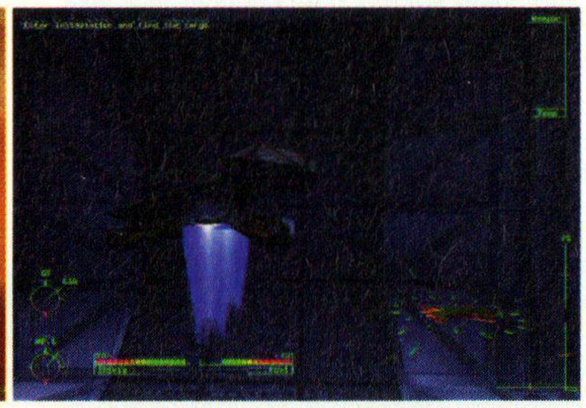


The **first game to be written** for the **PC DVD-ROM** is almost upon us. **Take a trip** through the **solar system in *Lander,*** from Psygnosis...

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Psygnosis
DEVELOPER	Magenta
STYLE	Space Sim
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-16
PROCESSOR	P166 P233
MEMORY	32MB
DISK SPACE	390MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Required

If you read the last issue of Total CONTROl, you now know everything worth knowing about DVD. You went out and bought the latest DVD player, a dozen or so top movies to watch on it, and a Dolby Digital audio system to get the best sound out of them. We bet you're well chuffed. But now, with the tattered remains of your credit card, you've been and bought a DVD-ROM drive for your PC, and you can't find a damn thing to play on it, can you? Well you won't have to fret for long, because Psygnosis are coming to your rescue with the first ever game written specifically for the new format, complete with MPEG-2 video and a full Dolby 5.1 soundtrack. We've seen the game, and we think you'll be glad you filled that extra drive bay.

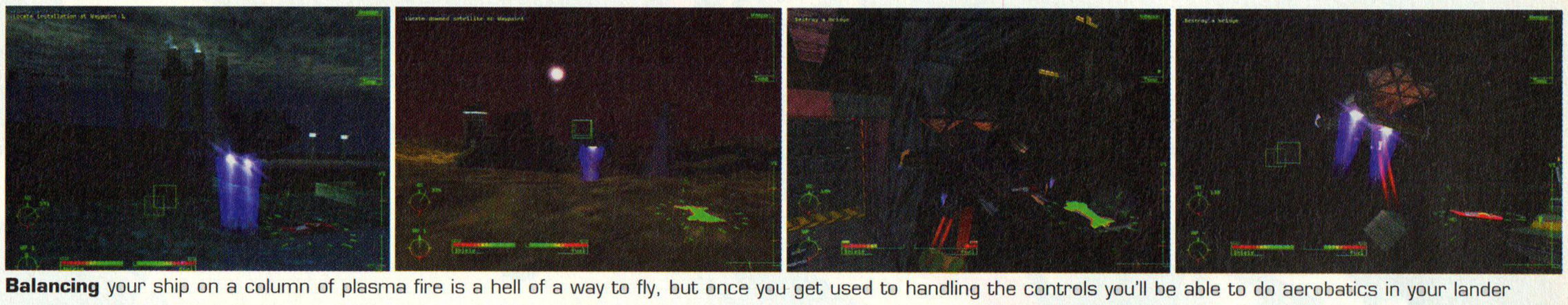




From Mars to Titan, you'll find yourself flying in some very unusual environments

The grand tour

Lander takes you on a tour of the many worlds that make up our solar system, pitting your piloting skills against dozens of different environments and gravity fields. Set in the year 3032, the giant interplanetary spacecraft Drake's Exception is setting off on a once-in-a-lifetime round trip taking advantage of a unique alignment of all the planets from Mercury to Pluto, giving scientists, explorers and tourists alike an



Balancing your ship on a column of plasma fire is a hell of a way to fly, but once you get used to handling the controls you'll be able to do aerobatics in your lander

unparalleled opportunity to witness a very special event. As the owner and pilot of a commercial planetary landing craft, this represents a valuable business opportunity. There are jobs to be done on every world, and your versatile craft is sure to be in demand. This is the story that launches you on your way, but as with all good adventures, there is more going on than first meets the eye.

The high frontier

The solar system of the early 31st Century is a very different place from today. Many of the larger moons of the gas-giant planets have small colonies and industrial installations, and visiting these makes up a large proportion of the thirty-plus levels in the game. Obviously these remote outposts cost a major fortune to set up, so they are maintained by huge corporations who hire your services during the voyage. Missions include salvage, search and destroy, and exploration. You will have to fly your lander both above and below the surface, venturing into tunnels and buildings in ever more difficult circumstances. As the voyage progresses through the system, the planetary environments become harsher and the missions become more challenging, but if you pay attention to the information available on bulletin boards and broadcast news, and read between the lines of your mission briefings, you may be able to pick up clues as to the real purpose of the Drake's Exception mission.

Sound investment

Taking its inspiration from the classic science fiction movie 2001: A Space Odyssey, the hidden plot of *Lander* involves the discovery of an ancient alien artefact, bearing clues to something even more mysterious lying at the edge of the solar system, which all the superpowers, both political and commercial, are extremely keen to get their hands on. Despite the fact that they don't understand what they are dealing with, they are sure that the artefact holds the key to supreme power, and so your fate becomes inextricably entwined with their quest.

THE STORY UNFOLDS WITH THE HELP OF STUNNING FMV SEQUENCES, PRODUCED TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE CAPABILITIES OF THE MPEG-2 FORMAT

The story unfolds with the help of stunning FMV sequences, produced to take full advantage of the capabilities of the MPEG-2 format. For the DVD version of the game, it will be well worthwhile investing in a Dolby Digital soundcard and a decent set of speakers for your PC. We were fortunate enough to be shown a demo of the game in Dolby Laboratories' private cinema, which, as you can imagine, boasts one of the world's finest sound systems. The soundtrack of the game, combined with the high quality animation of the cut scene FMVs, provided an awesome experience, comparable with the latest feature films. You just can't get quality like that from a CD.

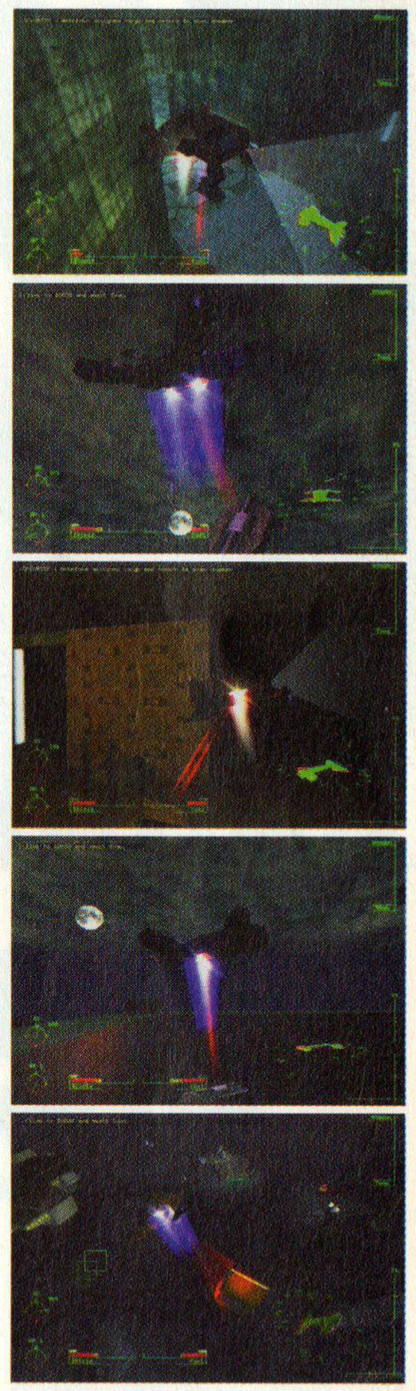
If you can walk away...

In terms of nuts-and-bolts gameplay, the flight mechanics of *Lander* recapitulate some forgotten classics from many years ago, such as *Lunar Lander* and *Thruster*. Your landing craft is mainly powered by a vertical-take-off rocket motor, so flying it is a matter of balancing the craft on the downward thrust of this engine and controlling the vector of forces in such a way as to achieve controlled flight. This is not as easy as it sounds, and it will take a lot of practice on the training missions before you become an expert.

If it takes you a while to get the hang of it, take heart – at the demonstration of the game at Dolby Laboratories, some members of the development team showed us that they could do with a bit more training!

The lander craft is equipped with a tractor-beam towing device which allows you to pick up objects and carry them off. When a heavy object like a downed satellite is dangling from the underside of your craft, it affects the handling in a realistic fashion, which will make the game even more challenging.

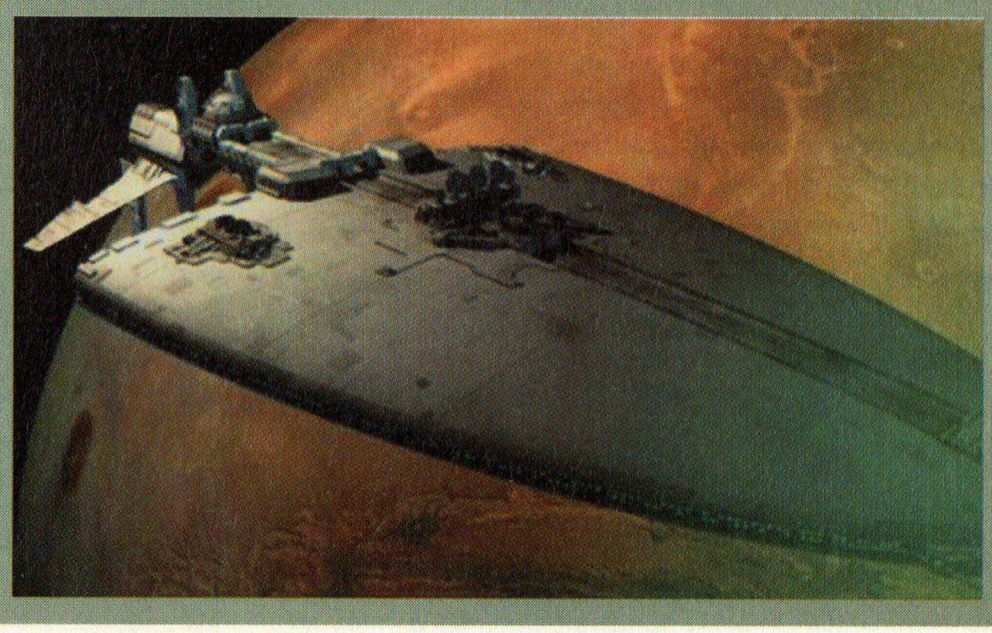
The development of *Lander* marks a major step in the history of computer games, and we are going to be fitting a DVD-ROM drive to the reviewing PC in anticipation of its release. **TC**



Challenging missions in variable gravity are what make the game fun

DRAKES EXCEPTION

The unusual name of the spacecraft in *Lander* is taken from a formula once put forward by the American astrophysicist F.D. Drake, known as the Drake Equation, or sometimes the Green Bank Formula. The equation attempts to estimate the likely number of advanced civilisations in our galaxy. It takes into account a number of factors, including such esoteric delights as the rate of formation of stars with a large enough "habitable zone" and long enough lifetime for the development of life, the fraction of these stars with planets, the fraction of those planets where life develops, and the fraction of planets with intelligent life that develop technological civilisations, i.e. that release signs of their existence into space. Some of these factors are estimates, but the formula generates results which tell us that there may be millions of advanced technological civilisations in our galaxy. We are not alone.



SUMMING UP

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- **A milestone game, and a major production by anyone's standards. Stunning visuals and true cinema quality sound.**

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- **You'll need a major system upgrade to get the best out of it. Tricky flight control interface.**

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If you've already got a DVD-ROM drive and MPEG-2 card, you owe yourself this game.

UPRISING 2:
Lead & Destroy

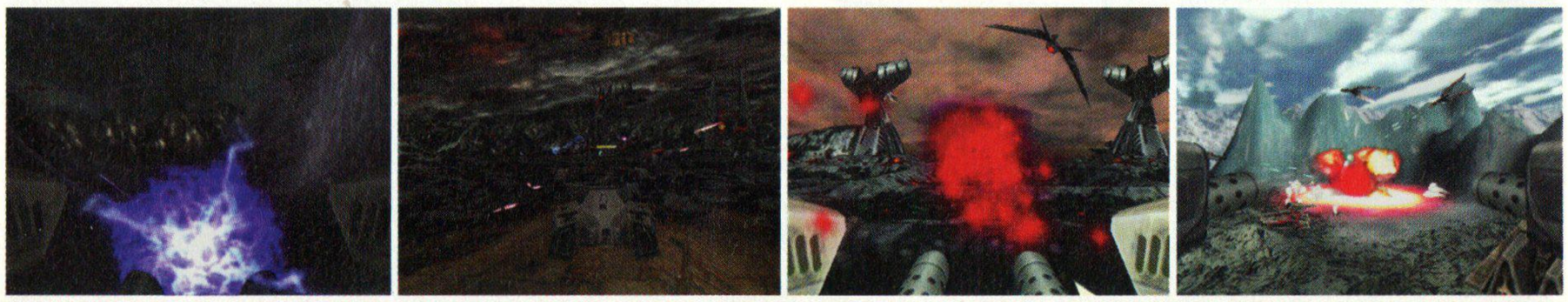
It's been just **over a year** since the first ***Uprising*** **was released** to **widespread critical acclaim**, so it's high time for it to **rise again**...

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	UbiSoft
DEVELOPER	Cyclone Studios
STYLE	3D Strategy
RELEASE	March
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-8
PROCESSOR	P166 P200
MEMORY	32MB 48MB
DISK SPACE	300MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

A year ago, UbiSoft released a game which took everyone a bit by surprise. Computer games had been getting a bit stale for a while, with every new release slotting neatly into its expected genre. Real-time strategy games were all the rage on the PC, and to tell you the truth I was getting heartily sick of them. I was all set to offer a bounty on the developers of the next *Command & Conquer* clone, when along came *Uprising*. It was new, it was different, and it was very good. The game borrowed elements from the real-time strategy genre, but added the radical new twist of a first-person viewpoint. The game certainly deserved to do a lot better than it actually did. It was – and still is – a highly original and very playable game. I think that it was only the release a couple of months later of Activision's superb *Battlezone* – a game which was of a similar style– which prevented *Uprising* from achieving the sales it deserved.

Trichy problem

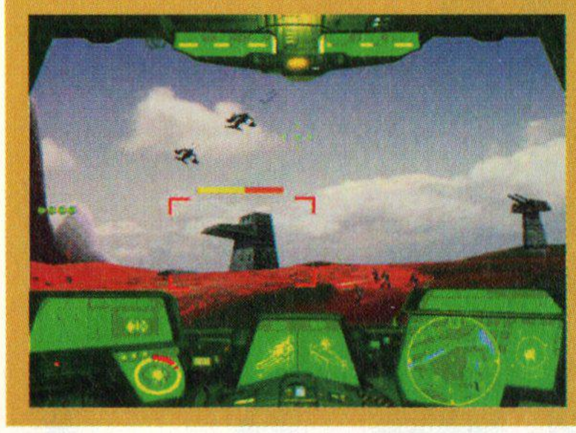
Uprising 2: Lead and Destroy is Cyclone's new version of their excellent game. In gameplay it is virtually identical, but since the original played very well indeed this is a good thing. The game has just the right balance of strategic depth and arcade action. As the player, you are in command of an elite fighting force waging a long and bloody war against an alien foe called the Trich. You control your forces from the cockpit of your Wraith hover tank, using a well-

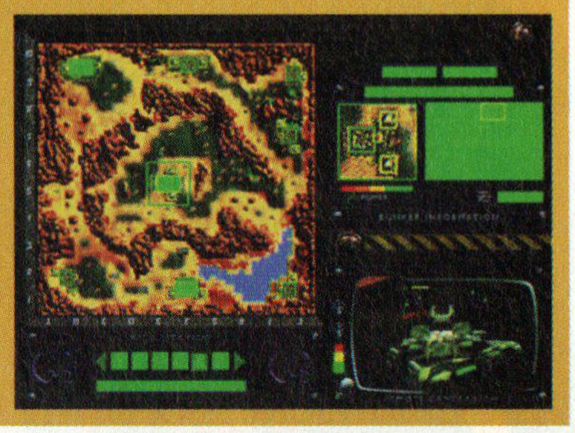


The superb 3D terrain graphics of *Uprising 2* really give you the feel of being right there, doing battle on inhospitable alien worlds

UPGRADE YOUR UPRISING

The original *Uprising*, released by UbiSoft in December 1997, is still available and well worth getting. It was one of the most original games of the year, and broke the mould of real-time strategy games. There are free patches available to download from UbiSoft's Internet website which will upgrade the game, making it compatible with the Voodoo Rush 3D accelerator card. The game's groundbreaking TerraTech graphics engine is fast and powerful, and with the addition of hardware acceleration can deliver some of the most stunning visuals around. Download the patch for free from http://www.ubisoft.co.uk/





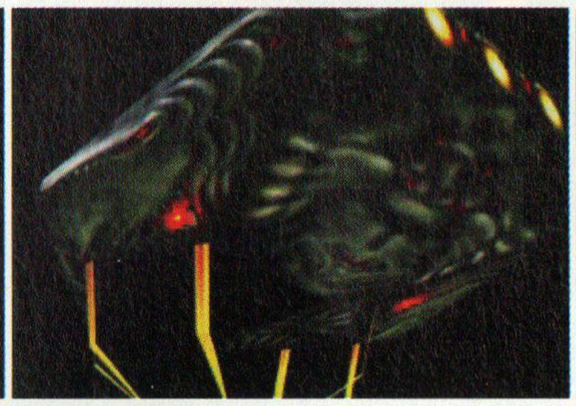


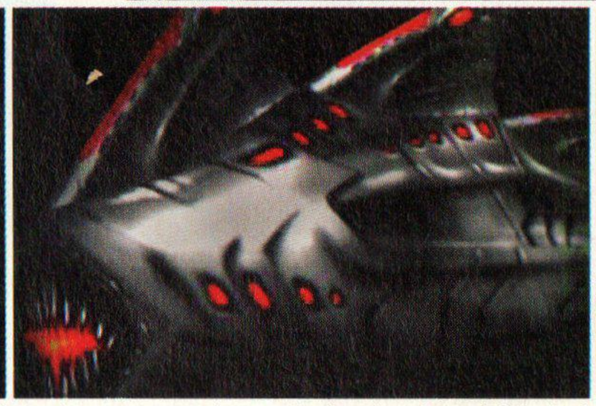














The designs of the vehicles are striking and imaginative, especially the alien Trich. The shapes are deceptively simple, which helps keep the frame rate nice and high

designed and easy to learn interface.

Upon landing on a new battlefield, your first task is to call up a 'citadel', a control tower which is air-dropped onto a specially prepared base site. Once the citadel is in place and operational, you can add to your base with factory units for the construction of infantry, tanks and aircraft, as well as defensive installations such as Gatling-gun turrets and missile silos.

Get stuck in

These units don't roll out of the doors of the production facilities. Instead, they are teleported straight into the thick of the battle at your command – which must be a nice surprise for them. You drive around the battlefield in your Wraith, following navigation waypoints and instructions from your command headquarters, looking for the mission objectives. When you find an enemy base you can summon up an appropriate assortment of fighting vehicles and infantry and command them into battle. As long as you have built the right combination of production facilities and you have sufficient energy, you will be able to fight and win. You can, of course, join in the battle yourself, and the Wraith is a formidable weapon, but the way to win the game is to command your troops effectively. It is in this way that the game is similar to real-time strategy games such as *Total Annihilation* and *Starcraft*. Imagine driving one of the tanks in such a game whilst simultaneously commanding the army and you have *Uprising*.

THE GAME BORROWED ELEMENTS FROM THE REAL-TIME STRATEGY GENRE, BUT ADDED THE RADICAL NEW TWIST OF A FIRST-PERSON VIEWPOINT

Tanking along

The main improvements in the sequel are visual. The original game did not support 3D acceleration, but this has been changed for *Lead and Destroy*. The new game sports lovely Voodoo-friendly graphics, and the terrain engine generates some very smooth curves for a polygon system. The texture maps on the landscape look very good, resembling the lunar surface. The preview version we have been sent only has limited lighting effects and some of the shading obviously needs more work, but the game already looks visually impressive. When you hit the turbo button, the ground zips past you with an agreeably high frame rate.

The designs of the various vehicles have been improved from the first game. They are still fairly simple and chunky, but the shapes are more imaginative and make good use of the lowest possible number of polygons. This helps keep the game's speed up even when there are a lot of vehicles moving about on the screen. The texture mapping of the vehicles has also been improved, with realistic looking colour schemes.

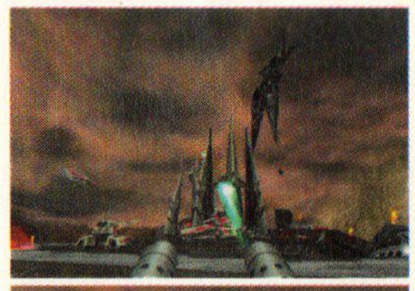
Clever stuff

The improvements to the gameplay are more subtle. One of the most useful is the inclusion of an AI system in your tank which enables you to deploy the right unit instantly by just hitting a single button. In the heat of battle this can be a lifesaver. Of course you can over-ride the AI at any time, but I found that its choices were usually appropriate.

The slightly confusing head-up display from the original game has been cleaned up and simplified and is a lot easier to understand. Options such as auto-repair and reconnaissance drones can now be accessed by a simple shift-click operation. All the keyboard controls can be customised to whatever configuration suits you best.

Multiplayer options include normal play with up to eight players commanding a selection of forces, but there is also a deathmatch Wraith-versus-Wraith game, and a racing game where you do laps of a course in your hovertank.

I'm looking forward to the release of *Uprising 2*. It always was a superb game, and with its new features it should do better in the shops second time around. **TC**





At the core of the game is the construction of a secure base to provide you with the unit you need

SUMMING UP

+

- A highly original game with superb graphics, strategic planning, and addictive arcade gameplay.

–

- A bit too memory-hungry for lower spec systems, and... er, that's it.

=

A well-thought-out and potentially very successful game which deserves to sell by the truckload.


-LIFE-


LEVEL-1
-LIFE-

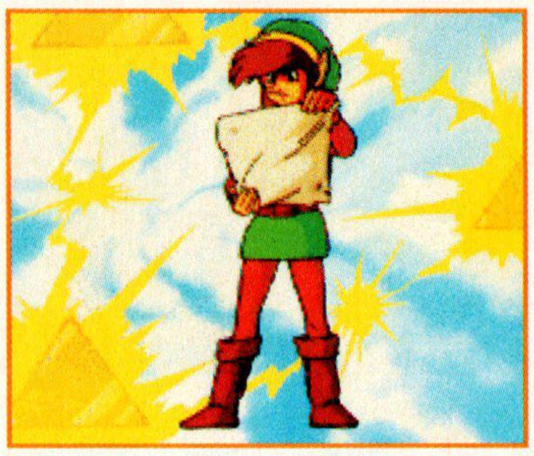
THE HISTORY OF... THE RPG

In the first of a **new series of features** examining the **beginnings of different** genres, Rachel Ryan looks at the **increasingly popular Role**-Playing Game...

The gaming trend of the moment would appear to be role-playing. Since the release of *Final Fantasy VII*, the world has been going crazy for Japanese-style RPGs. The genre is by no means new, however. Like many Eastern trends introduced to the West, the Japanese RPG has a history going back years. Even the newest of fans, introduced to the genre with *Final Fantasy VII* on the PlayStation, will know that their favourite game is by no means the start of things – it's called *Final Fantasy VII*, after all. But did you know that other titles in this particular series have been translated? Probably. Being fan favourites, the *Final Fantasy* games have certainly been well-documented. However – and this is a real shame – despite the series' comparative popularity in America (up to and including the release of *FFVII*), only the famous PlayStation title has been released in the UK.

The first *Final Fantasy* surfaced on Nintendo's Famicom (the Japanese NES) back in 1987. Now the most popular RPG series in Japan, *Final Fantasy* had fairly humble beginnings. Certainly not the first in the genre, it was initially just one small part of a new trend of video games based on Western concepts in stat-based gameplay. Computer RPGs actually go right back to the late-70s, when 'Rogue'-likes (i.e. *Rogue* and its many clones) appeared on mainframes in the West. Rogue-type games had no graphics; character squares were composed of textual icons. They had no storyline whatsoever either, and were concerned solely with building up statistics by fighting monsters in the various rooms of a 'dungeon'. One interesting thing about these games was the fact that they were entirely randomised – the computer would work out each area, including all the monsters you would have to fight, before you entered it. Far from evolving, however, Rogue-likes died a death (possibly due to the wide gulf between mainframe owners and







gamers of the time). Computer RPGs that surfaced in the early-80s were mainly text adventures, which had a story to them but little or no battles. In the meantime, RPGs remained strictly Dungeons and Dragons affairs played by role-players using pen, paper, and dice. It can be argued that the Japanese console RPG, while having its roots in traditional role-playing, is purely an Eastern invention.

Console RPGs came about largely from experimentation with a style that the Japanese initially considered to be very Western – based as it was on pen-and-paper RPGs imported from the West, and generic 'save the princess' European fairy tales. After several companies produced efforts that had their roots firmly in Western genres, such as Falcom's *Dragon Slayer* (a pseudo Rogue-like with no story interaction whatsoever), the genre came of age in 1986 with Enix's first instalment of *Dragon Quest*. A Famicom release, *Dragon Quest* was revolutionary in that it actually had a predefined storyline, and the main character (a prince who had to save a princess – you have to start somewhere) could converse with the other inhabitants of his world. Enix was also one of the first companies to commission a respected manga artist to design the protagonists in their game – Akira Toriyama (now famous for the Dragonball comics and anime) has been designing for Enix ever since. The *Dragon Quest* series is now up to part seven, and despite remaining incredibly popular in Japan, only the first two games were ever translated.

1986 was certainly a good year for RPGs. It also saw the release of the first action games with equippable weapons, now officially (though a little erroneously) known collectively as Action RPGs. Falcom were there again with *Xanadu* for the MSX, but the most famous of this particular genre is of course Nintendo's *Zelda* series, which was first released for – yes, you've guessed it – the Japanese Famicom. Ironically, *Zelda* is as far removed from the genre as an RPG can get without actually becoming a platform game in that it doesn't involve any statistics beyond the fact that the hero, Link, can build up his energy by collecting hearts. Because of this many purists don't consider *Zelda* to be an RPG, more of a graphic adventure. It certainly has its place in the genre, however, due to the fact that it has inspired so many later efforts, and it is arguably based on pure RPGs with elements of the original text adventure (i.e. the puzzle solving) thrown in. Sadly, though, when placed next to its sequels the original *Zelda* looks very dated. Like many Japanese games of the mid-80s, it has a plot given in the manual but arguably no storyline. In fact it wasn't until 1987, the year that *Final Fantasy* first appeared, that games with decent interactive plots saw the light of day.

Since the genre first came about, RPGs have evolved into something beyond the heavily tactical affairs they once were. RPGs these days are high-budget productions, enriched with wonderful storylines and appealing character designs. And for a gaming style that doesn't need pretty graphics to win over the existing fans, it's surprising to see just how gorgeous RPGs look these days. Gamers in Japan prefer the genre over any other, and in the past few years RPGs have caught on quickly in the West as companies translate the best-sellers to keep up with the growing demand. Hopefully this article will provide you with the information needed to fully appreciate the evolution of the genre, and perhaps after reading about some of the older classics you'll have a bit of a shopping list to be working your way through. Never think that RPG gaming ends with the current crop of role-players being released on the PlayStation et al – it's a hobby that is served well by experiences of what earlier RPGs had to offer.

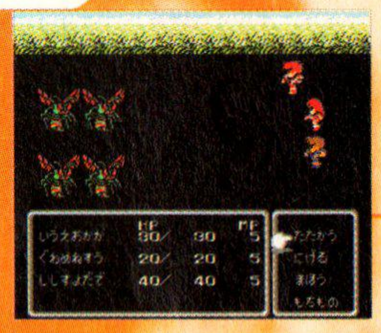








Final Fantasy











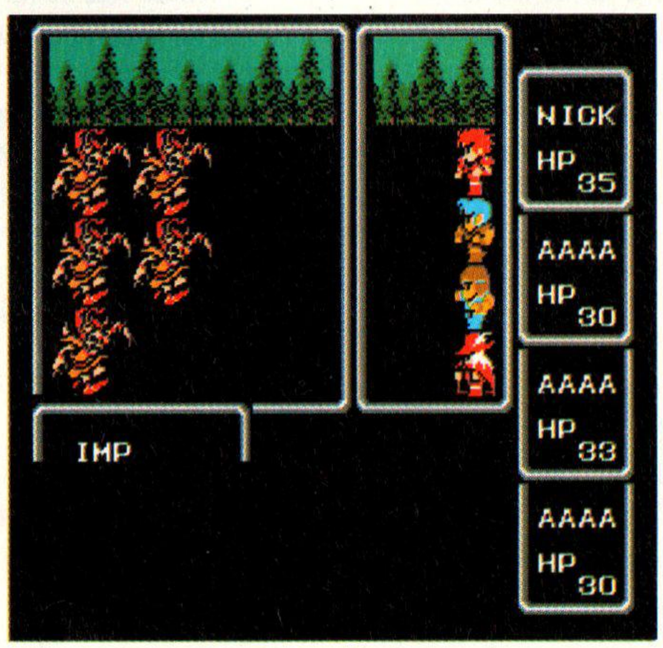
Series overview: Final Fantasy

Unlike the other famous RPG series' outlined here, Square's *Final Fantasy* games have no continuity in the sense that each game is a story in its own right. Only the actual game engine – plus certain items, spells, monsters and animals such as the Chocobo riding birds – make it into every instalment. But *Final Fantasy* is well-known for its style rather than familiar stories. The gameplay has remained in roughly the same turn-based form since the original, and the talented design team have devoted their lives to every release – Hironobu Sakaguchi (producer) Yoshitaka Amano (designer) and Nobuo Uematsu (music composer) are by now household names in Japan.

We don't have the room to detail all the *Final Fantasy* games here. Given that they each have a separate storyline, such a feature would need pages all to itself. However, we can bring you details of the titles released in the US, plus the rather odd numbering system that has developed as a result of translation.

The first *Final Fantasy* was released in 1987 for the Japanese Famicom, and the translated version for the NES took another three years to surface. The storyline of this particular title is a little basic: You control a party of four nameless 'Light Warriors' who have to use elemental orbs to bring peace to the world. However, the game is massive considering its age, and the plot unfolds in many directions. The Famicom games *Final Fantasy II* and *Final Fantasy III* were never translated, so the next game to reach the West was *Final Fantasy IV* on the SNES. Released in Japan in 1991, *Final Fantasy IV* featured a highly emotive storyline, centring around the hero, Cecil, who gives up his post as Dark Knight to the Empire after being ordered to pillage small kingdoms in the name of power. The game featured many innovations, such as the real-time system in the battles (known as Active Time Battle) which has remained with the series since. Note that after skipping translations of *Final Fantasy II* and *III*, Square US decided to call the American version of the fourth game '*Final Fantasy II*'. *Final Fantasy V* was another game we missed out on, which is a shame really as it easily had the best combat system of the series. Fortunately, America did see the release of *Final Fantasy VI*, which many regard as the best RPG of all time. *Final Fantasy III* (as the Western version is known) is an absolute phenomenon – the storyline, which is concerned with the resurgence of magic and the devastation that ensues, is incredible, the graphics at the time were unfaultable, and the music was the best to ever grace an RPG. All RPG fans should make it their goal to play this classic.

Finally, of course, this brings us to the latest game in the series – *Final Fantasy VII* for the PlayStation. We're not going to tell you anything about this game, on account of the fact that you'll know enough about it by now. You'll also know that Square are working on *Final Fantasy VIII* – here's hoping their commercial success won't allow them to compromise the quality of this title. Knowing Square the way we do, however, the very least *Final Fantasy VIII* will achieve is to live up to expectations.



Phantasy Star

Series overview: Phantasy Star

While *Final Fantasy* remained the flagship RPG series for Nintendo for many years, Sega remained undaunted with the releases of their home-grown *Phantasy Star* games. These turn-based RPGs are innovative in the sense that they are sci-fi orientated as opposed to being set in fantasy environments. Each game (with the exception of part three) takes place on various planets in the Algo star system, which is visited every 1000 years by a malevolent being known only as 'Dark Force'. Sega have actually managed to translate every title in the series with the exception of the *Game Gear* sidequests. Square take note.The first *Phantasy Star* was a Master System release in the golden years of RPGs – the Japanese version appeared way back in 1987. In *Phantasy Star* you took the role of Alis Landale, a 15-year-old girl (yes, you read me right) who was out to avenge the death of her brother. Oddly enough, the dungeons in *Phantasy Star* were in first-person 3D and needed a lot of mapping out. Later games in the series then utilised the standard overhead format. *Phantasy Star* quickly migrated to the Megadrive with the release of the sequel in 1989. The hero of *Phantasy Star II* is male (as were all the central figures since), and at the start of the game he is plagued by nightmares of a lone girl fighting a terrible demon. After that things went steadily downhill, as his home planet slowly deteriorated under the control of Mother Brain – the central computer system that suddenly stated to malfunction. The 1990 release of *Phantasy Star III* marked a departure for the series in the sense that it was not set in the Algo Star System – a fact that disappointed Sega gamers a little. Things might have been remedied if it weren't for the lacklustre gameplay – *Phantasy Star III* is certainly the weak link in the series and is often ignored by fans. It does have a bearing on the story, however, just not a very strong one.

Sega's 'final' *Phantasy Star* game was officially *Phantasy Star IV – the End of the Millennium*. A 1993 Megadrive release, it heralded in the start of a new age in the apparent destruction of Dark Force by the main protagonists, 16-year-old Chaz and his friends. However, it now looks as if Sega has picked up the series once again – not only did they release a *'Sega Ages'* pack for the Saturn comprising all four games, but there are strong rumours of a planned Dreamcast follow-up.

Series overview: Lunar

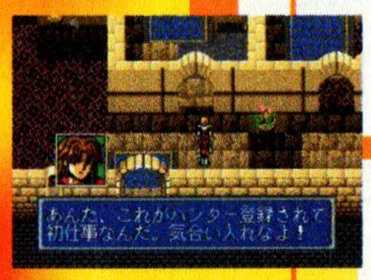
GameArts are relative newcomers to the RPG genre – their most famous series, *Lunar*, first appeared in 1992. Despite the fact that they've always developed for comparatively unpopular consoles (GameArts are true Sega devotees), the company has maintained a prolific output. The *Lunar* games are turn-based RPGs that borrow a lot from other series such as *Ys* and *Final Fantasy*, but they have a unique charm that is also present in *Grandia* – GameArts' 3D role-playing masterpiece for the Saturn. As you've probably guessed, all the *Lunar* games are set on the moon in the distant future. Despite this they are classic fantasy, not sci-fi. The first RPG in the series was *Lunar – The Silver Star* for the Mega CD, translated in 1993 by Working Designs. The storyline centred on the young hero Arhes (Alex in the US version) and his dreams to become a Dragon Master. Accompanying him on his quest was his baby dragon Nall, and his mysterious would-be girlfriend, Luna. The game was too charming to believe, and resulted in a sequel, *Lunar Eternal Blue*, which was released in 1994 for the now-ailing Mega CD. Set 1000 years after the original, it followed a similar plot, only now the main character was Hiro, the dragon Ruby, and the mysterious girlfriend Lucia, a visitor from the barren 'Blue Star'. The American version appeared in 1995. Now kudos to Working Designs for releasing these games in the first place, but their translations barely fall short of intolerable – childish Americanised affairs full of toilet humour. Because of this, many purists import the Japanese versions of *Lunar*, preferring to play through them with walkthroughs. You have been warned.The only *Lunar* game that escaped Working Designs' attentions was *Mahou Gakuen Lunar* (*Magical School Lunar*), a sidequest that had little to do with the other two games. This was a 1995 Game Gear release aimed largely at girls (the main protagonists are all female). Sadly, it doesn't quite live up to the standards set by the originals.

Lunar has come of age of late with the spectacular Saturn updates released by publishing company Kadokawa Shoten. All three games have been reprogrammed with beautiful visuals, new story twists and about an hour of high quality anime cut-scenes each. Kadokawa and GameArts are to be applauded for taking what were originally decent games and turning them into masterpieces of the calibre of *Final*











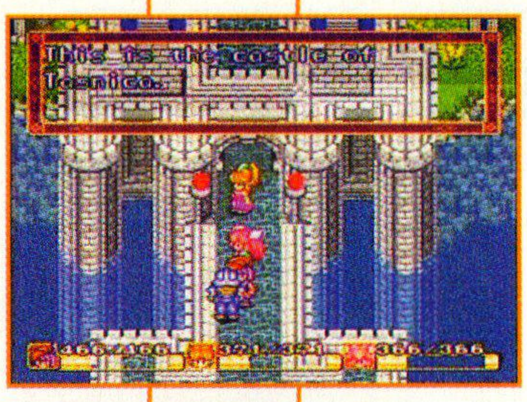


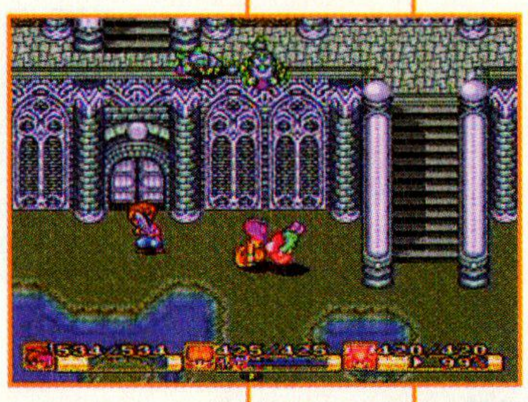
Lunar

Secret of Mana

Square are also famous for the classic *Seiken Densetsu* series of action RPGs – known better to Westerners as *Secret of Mana*. Here are some shots from the SNES instalments (the first game was on the Game Boy, titled *Final Fantasy Adventure* in the West). The sequel to the original SNES *Secret of Mana*, *Seiken Densetsu III* was never translated.









Ys

Fantasy. The Silver Star update, *Lunar: Silver Star Story*, has since been ported to the PlayStation by Kadokawa, and a translation of the game, which has become my personal favourite RPG ever, is planned for American release sometime this year. From Working Designs. I think I'll go lie down now...

Series overview: Ys

MSX and PC Engine maestros Falcom aren't well-known in the West, but their most popular series, *Ys*, is worthy of note for two reasons. Firstly, the *Ys* series introduced original storylines beyond the 'save the princess' concept that will by now be familiar to everyone. Secondly, *Ys* was truly stat-based without being turn-based, and it's games like this that inspired classics like *Secret of Mana*.

Each *Ys* game differs vastly from the others in terms of plot, but they all have something in common. For a start you always play the part of Adol Christin, a red-haired swordsman. In every *Ys* game, Adol goes out looking for adventure, which he invariably finds along with several beautiful girls who throw themselves at him at every juncture. At the end of every *Ys* game, totally unaware of the women pursuing him, Adol sets off into the sunset, breaking the hearts of said girls. No doubt frustrated male gamers across Japan really have it in for this guy...

Ys was first released on the MSX (a Japanese computer with a cartridge port) in 1987, and while it was popular there didn't seem to be much to it really. It wasn't until *Ys* was ported onto the PC Engine as a CD-ROM (the first CD-ROM RPG ever) that things finally took shape. This package appeared in 1988, and alongside the original it included *Ys Book I* – the sequel that explained what the hell was going on in the first game as well as taking the plot to new levels. Only the first three *Ys* titles have ever been translated – the first is available for the Master System as well as the American PC Engine (the Turbo Graphx). Of course, *Ys Book II* appears solely on the Turbo CD release, and *Ys Book III*, released in the West for a grand total of three consoles (PC Engine CD, Super Famicom and Megadrive) is a side on platformer designed to cash in on the success of *Ys I* and *II*. It's a side-quest rather than a follow-up, and it's complete rubbish, so enough of that. Falcom continued to produce console-based sequels to *Ys* up until part six – available solely for the PC. Since then they have remained PC developers alone, though updates of their early games have recently appeared on the Saturn and PlayStation. Hopefully the success of these titles will make them see sense, and we'll be able to import their innovative RPGs on consoles such as the Dreamcast.





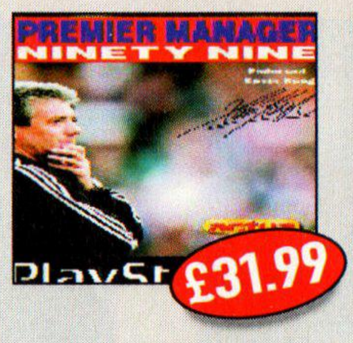
Role Call

For more information on the mainstream RPG world, plus articles and tips on little-known RPGs and imports, or the chance to write your own features, pick up a copy of Role Call – the UK's premier RPG guide. Issues 8-10 are currently available from: Dave Sanders, Flat 21, 8 Station Road, Portstewart, Co. Londonderry, N. Ireland, BT55 7DA. Each issue is priced £1.50, which includes postage. All cheques must be made payable to 'Dave Sanders'.

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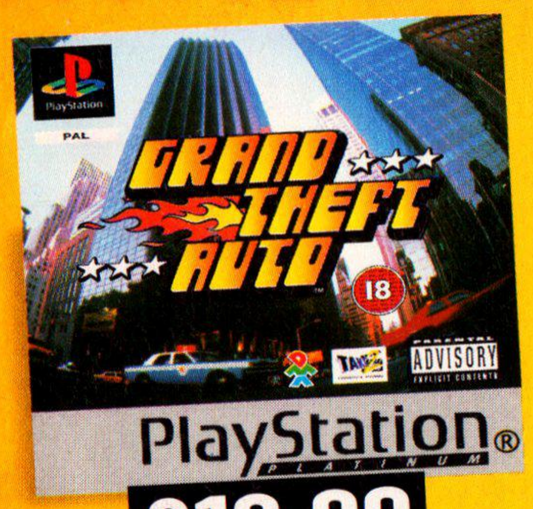


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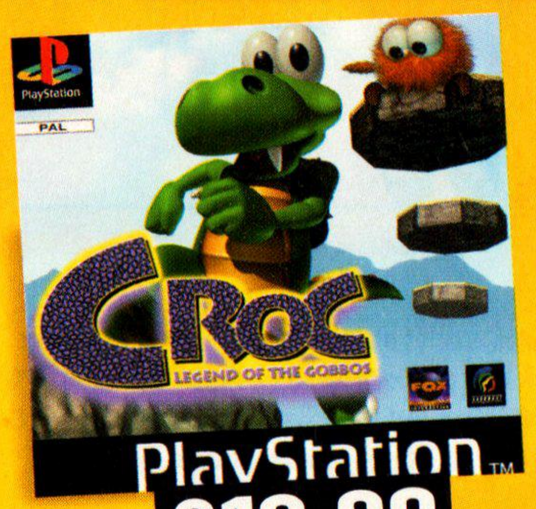
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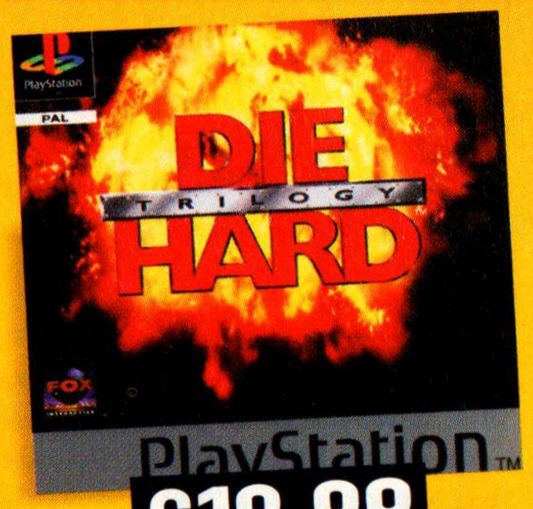
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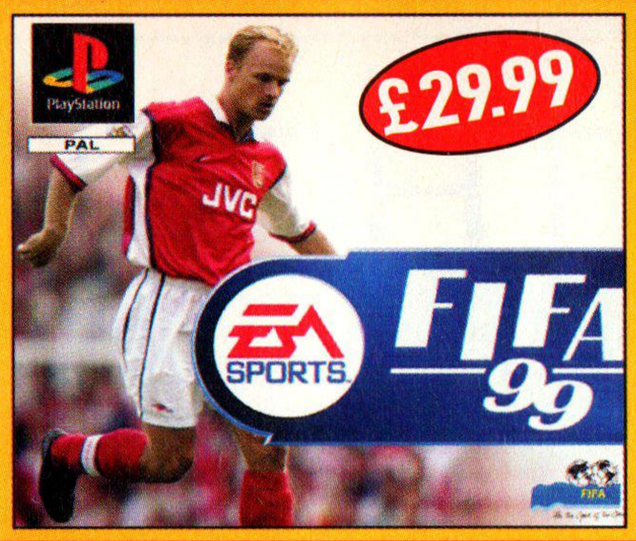
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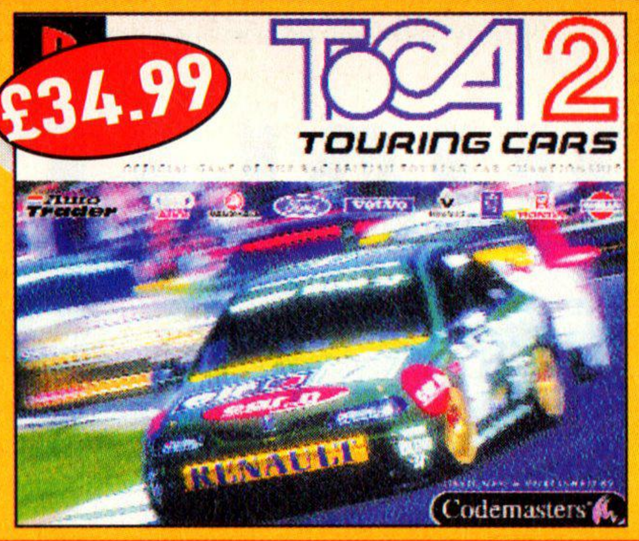
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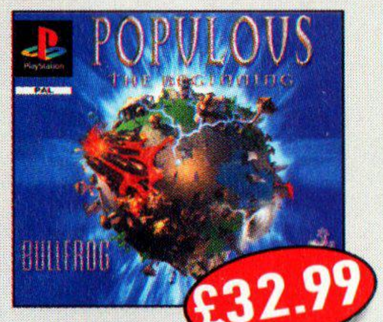
FIFA '99

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TOCA 2

The Number 1 PlayStation hit is back with more cars, more tracks and improved graphics. Easy to play, yet hard to master, TOCA 2 is the ultimate racing game and you can experience all the thrills and spills for just £34.99. Can you take the chequered flag?



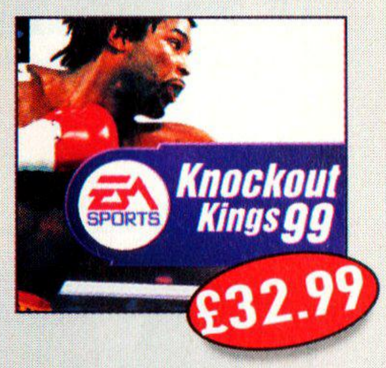




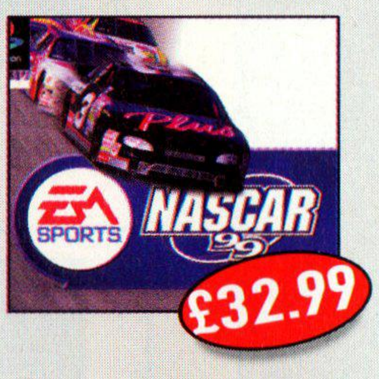


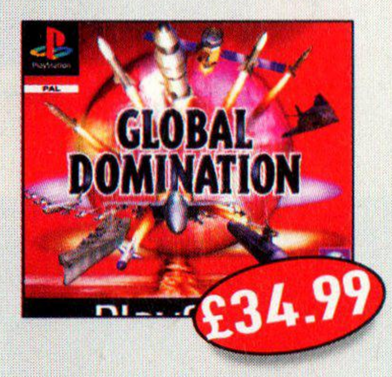


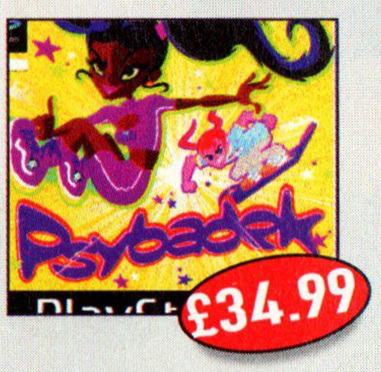














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Q QUALITY CONTROL

GAMES TESTED

070 . . . . . Championship Manager 3

072 . . . . . Akuji the Heartless

074 . . . . . Sim City 3000

076 . . . . . Micro Machines 64

078 . . . . . Rainbow Six: Eagle Watch

080 . . . . . Premier Manager '99

082 . . . . . Delta Force

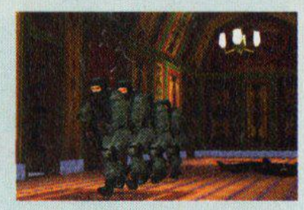
084 . . . . . Jedi Knight Dark Forces II

086 . . . . . Alpha Centauri

088 . . . . . Quake II: Extremeties

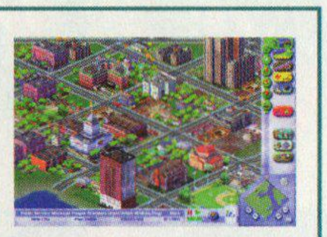


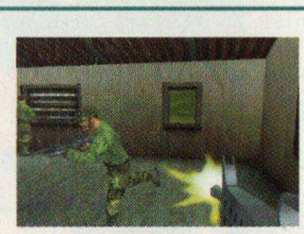
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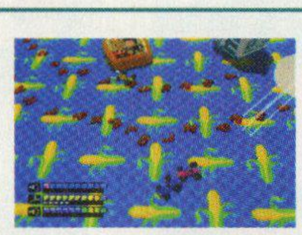

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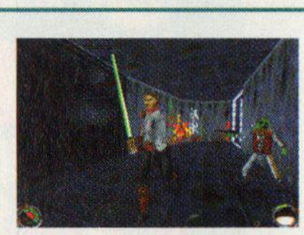

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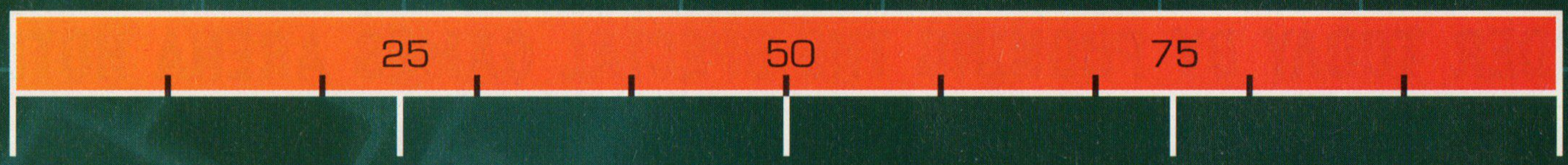

074


082


076


084

VERDICT RATINGS



0 – 25

Generally speaking the games falling into this category are so pig ugly that not even their own mothers could care less about them. Perhaps the problem is that the programmers felt the same way? Please consider any game receiving a rating this low to be hazardous to your mental health – we're not scoring it this badly for fun you know! You wouldn't believe the grief we get from publishers for giving out these scores, but we're here to serve you, nobody else.

26 – 50

A below average game, but one which at least has some redeeming features. Certain aspects of these titles might be on a par with those scoring more highly, but if a game scores below 50% you can assume that it is flawed when seen as a complete package. Die-hard fans of a particular genre might still enjoy these games, but as a general rule you'll be better off saving your money. We might get sent games for free, but you don't, and we won't forget that.

51 – 75

Any game that achieves a score of over 50% should be considered an above average title worthy of your attention – especially if you're a fan of the genre. Most of these titles will not disappoint, they probably just lack that certain something that separates a good game from a great game. Please note that as our method of scoring is different to those in other magazines, a similar score in another publication might not represent a product of comparable quality.

76 – 100

These are the games that make buying the systems they appear on worthwhile. A lot of games players have access to more than one format nowadays, and these games are the reason why. Games achieving scores of 90% and above in particular can be considered highly recommended. We won't be giving out scores that high too often, so if you're thinking of purchasing a game that we've seen fit to endorse in this way, what are you waiting for?

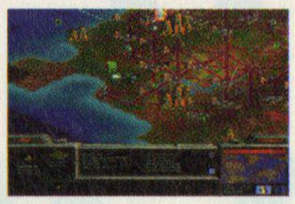
FORMATS



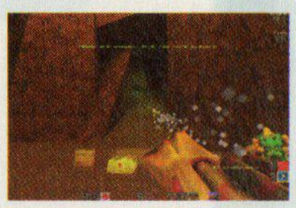
90+ AWARD

Be sure to look out for our prestigous 90+ award, but don't expect to see it on every other review. We don't endorse games in this manner unless they really warrant it.

086



088



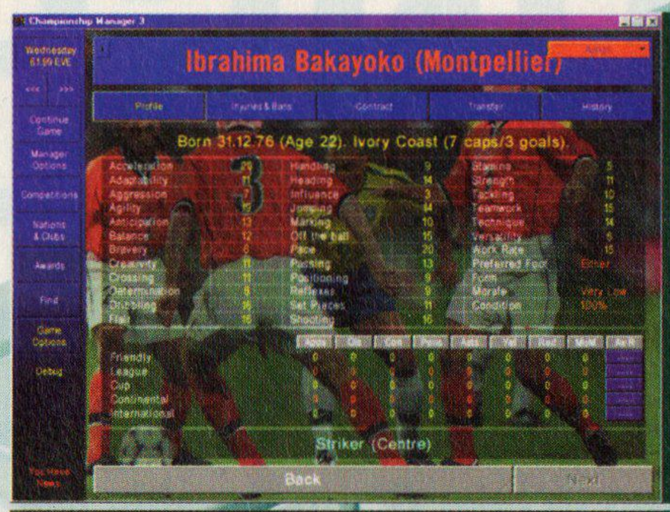
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091



070



Championship Manager 3

The best football management sim returns from injury, just in time for the big title challenge

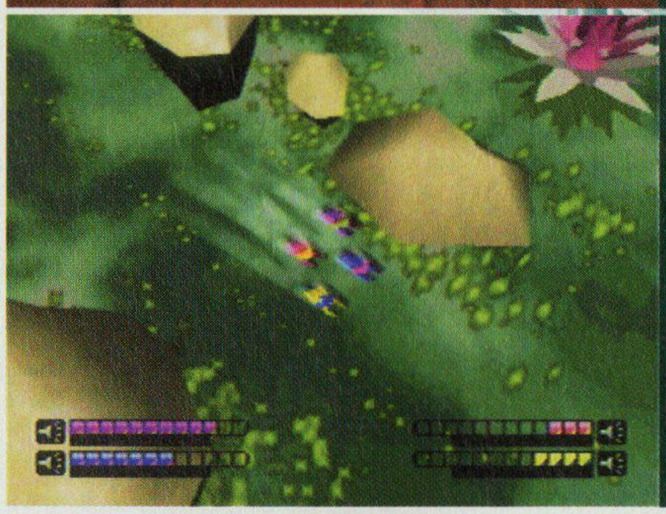
072



Akuji the Heartless

Voodoo people be aware – Akuji the Heartless needs a heart in this 3D platformer from Crystal Dynamics

076



Micro Machines 64

One of best ever PlayStation games gets an overdue conversion to the N64. Small is indeed beautiful!

TOTAL CONTROL CHARTS

Your chance to check out who has been signing out what from the Total CONTROL cupboard of delights. Guess which game we're still playing on the network then...

Justin

1. Half-Life (PC)
2. The Legend of Zelda... (Nintendo 64)
3. Tekken 3 (PlayStation)
4. Sega Rally 2 Championship (Dreamcast)
5. Championship Manager 3 (PC)

Will

1. Half-Life (PC)
2. Sega Rally 2 Championship (Dreamcast)
3. Sonic Adventure (Dreamcast)
4. Micro Machines 64 (Nintendo 64)
5. Final Fantasy VIII (PlayStation)

Nick

1. Sega Rally 2 Championship (Dreamcast)
2. Half-Life (PC)
3. Sonic Adventure (Dreamcast)
4. All-Star Smash Brothers (Nintendo 64)
5. Championship Manager 3 (PC)

Cliff

1. Anno 1602 (PC)
2. Half-Life (PC)
3. Uprising 2 (PC)
4. Tekken 3 (PlayStation)
5. Thief: The Dark Project (PC)

INFORMATION

INFORMATION

PLATFORM	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Sony
DEVELOPER	Namco
STYLE	Beat-'em-up
RELEASE	£34.99
PRICE	Out Now
PLAYERS	1-2
ANALOGUE	No
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block

This is where you can find out everything you need to know about the game reviewed. The information box is different for each format and includes everything from the release date and price to more specific details such as how many blocks it will take up on your PlayStation memory card or whether the game takes advantage of your Nintendo 64 Rumble Pak. Note that the PC version of the box will occasionally contain both the minimum and recommended specifications required to run the game.

TAKING CONTROL

TAKING CONTROL

You need only watch the intro sequence to understand just how special *Tekken 3* really is. With all the style of a Hollywood blockbuster, it grabs you by the throat and draws you in to the whole experience. The first play is equally satisfying; silky smooth animation, plenty of impressive moves and a great selection of very different characters. Everything here has been polished until it shines.

What did we think of the game after 20 minutes or so? Needless to say there are games which might seem like a waste of time for the first hour or so but which reward perseverance. By the same token there are those that seem great when you test them for ten minutes in your local software emporium but can disappoint once you've played them at home for a longer time. This is our way of warning you about games where your first impressions may not be reliable enough to base your purchasing decision on.

OTHER FORMATS?

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ●○○○○

Namco have not released a game on the PC to date. We would love to think that *Tekken 3* could be the game to buck the trend, but it's extremely unlikely.

N64 ○○○○○

Although a few of Namco's minor titles have made it to the N64, Sony's deal means that there is as much chance as no chance of *Tekken* appearing on the N64.

The review you are reading may not be for a game currently confirmed for release on your machine. However, Total CONTROL is a genuine multi-format magazine. This means that at every opportunity we will be keeping you fully informed of any developments affecting you and the machines that you own. The Other Formats boxout is a prime example of this, a probability rating of 1-5 indicates what we consider to be the likelihood of the featured game ever appearing on your machine, while the accompanying text explains our reasoning or that of the company concerned.

VERDICT

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Tekken 3
GRAPHICS	95
SOUND	92
PLAYABILITY	95
OVERALL	94
Out of 100	

With scores given in three categories before arriving at a final score you can see exactly where the game's strengths and weaknesses lie. Don't necessarily expect the overall score to be a mathematical average of the other three though, the playability rating will generally carry a lot more weight than the other two. And how important the scores for sound and graphics are will vary according to the style of the game reviewed. It's also important to note that we at Total CONTROL have different ideas about percentages than many of our competition; see the diagram and explanations on the left for a breakdown of exactly how scores are awarded in Total CONTROL. Ignore the verdict box at your peril!

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

Total CONTROL 90+ AWARD

Plenty of wannabes have tried to take ***Championship Manager*'s title** of **'best football manager sim'** over the past few months. Well, they all might as well give up now – *CM3* is about to **hit the streets...**

TAKING CONTROL

This game has been one of the most highly anticipated titles in the office. With plenty of hard-core *CM2* fans, this game had a big reputation to live up to. Lots more statistics, great tactics and better matches. What more could you ask for? Not to be so anal, perhaps?







INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Eidos
DEVELOPER	Sports Interactive
STYLE	Management Sim
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£34.99
PLAYERS	1-8
PROCESSOR	P166 **P266**
MEMORY	16MB **32MB**
DISK SPACE	200MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Not Supported

In these heady days of graphical fertility, it seems unusual that a text-based game might trigger such strong emotions. Well, that is exactly what Eidos' *Championship Manager* series has achieved over the last few years, the pinnacle of which was *CM2 97/98*. That game managed to bring home all the excitement, all the highs and lows of managing a professional football team, better than any other game in the genre. That is, until now, when Eidos are about to release their follow-up to that successful title, *Championship Manager 3*. To say that expectations are high for this game would be an understatement. However, any fears that fans may have should be laid to rest – *CM3* is nothing short of the most in-depth, comprehensive and compulsive football management game ever seen.

The hand of God

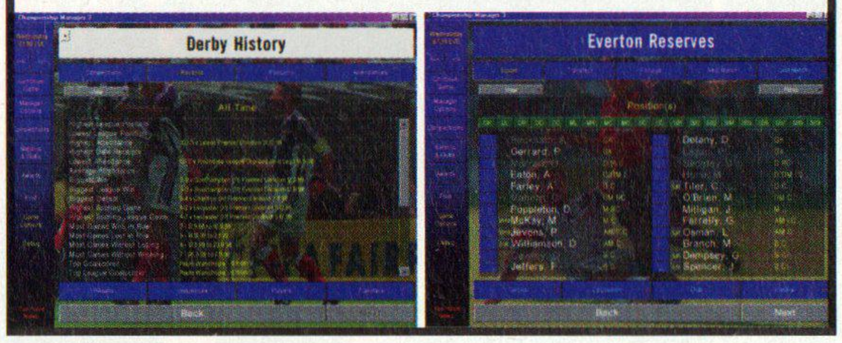
CM3 builds on many of the qualities that made the previous games so good. Firstly, the database of players is nothing short of phenomenal – there are something like 14,000 players and over 2,000 teams from all over the world. Countries like Argentina, Japan and Norway are included for the first time, and it is now possible to manage a team in one of fourteen leagues. Also, if your PC is powerful enough, it is possible to run all of these leagues consecutively if you wish. Fancy a managerial career which takes you from England to Spain to Italy to Scandinavia and the Far East? Well it's now possible with *CM3*. Players have also been given a huge overhaul and are now rated on 31 separate

categories. To the beginner this might all be a little overwhelming; the simple task of searching for players can become a bewilderment of statistics and often leads to confusion. This is where the extensive scouting and staff options come in. Teams now employ a number of staff – coaches, scouts and physiotherapists – and certain duties can be given over to these. Staff can also be traded and 'bought' from other clubs in much the same way that players are. Coaches, in particular, play a major part; *CM3* now includes a training option where individual players can work on different parts of their game.

The biggest improvement over *CM2* is the way that matches are played. With *CM2*, there were only a limited number of outcomes from each situation in a game. For example, if a striker received the ball he would either shoot, dribble, or pass. In *CM3* it is possible for a striker to receive the ball, hold it up and wait for other players to arrive, or try and take on the opposition. There are also other, off the ball possibilities to take into the equation – players getting into scuffles on so on. With this pattern repeated all over the park, it is easy to see how games can take a number of different routes. The overall impression is that games take on a more realistic feel, and the illusion of a real game of football being played is infinitely enhanced. Other games are also played at the same time as yours, allowing you to keep up to date with all the important games around the country. A quick word about the difficulty – any *CM2* experts out there who are expecting an easy ride are in for a shock. *Championship Manager 3* is way more difficult than its predecessor – partly because it's more realistic, I guess.

A LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

***Championship Manager* need never be a one player game ever again. Although its predecessor allowed more than one person to take control of a team, it was a turn-based situation. How boring was it waiting for the other players to do their stuff? Well, now you can play the game over a network with up to eight participants. This only really applies to people with a LAN network like games journos but, hey, we love it!**



and when they are not. Each team now also has its own reserve squad. Players can move between the two squads, and this also opens up a whole new area of youth team and first team players.

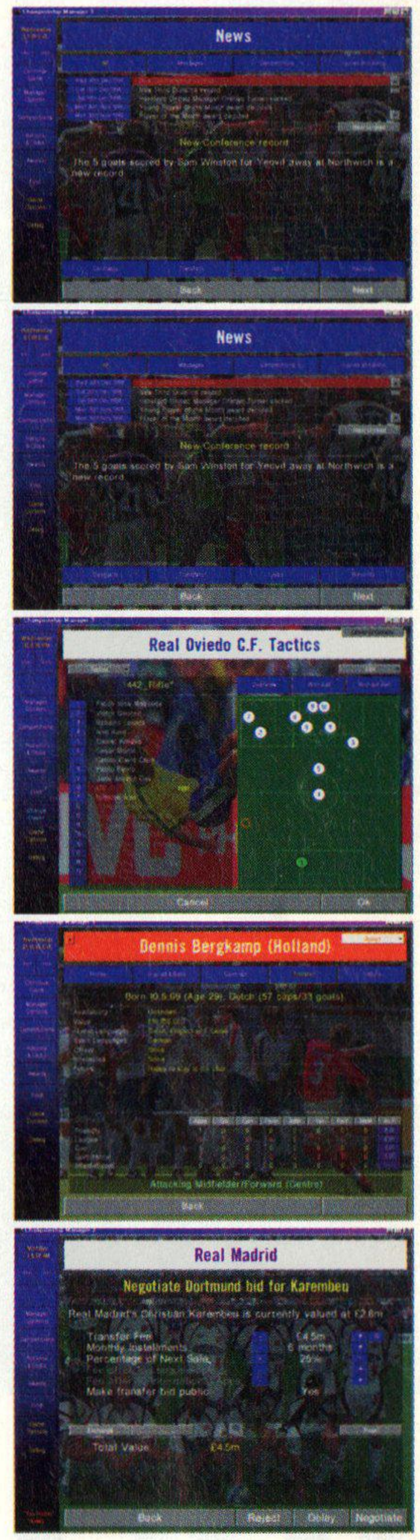
All is not rosy, however – especially if you own a low end PC. Because of all the data being processed, you'll need something of a monster PC to run the game at a reasonable speed. A P200, for example, takes far too long – minutes passed when just trying to continue to the next day, and this is only one league running. We suggest something along the lines of a P300 with a decent amount of memory if you want to run several leagues in conjunction.

ANY FEARS THAT FANS MAY HAVE SHOULD BE LAID TO REST – CM3 IS NOTHING SHORT OF THE MOST IN-DEPTH, COMPREHENSIVE AND COMPULSIVE FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT GAME EVER SEEN

More options in the final third

Team tactics have also been lavished with attention and now boast a depth which must be bordering on the real thing. Each player can be given individual instructions such as running with the ball, man to man marking, and if they should shoot from long-range or not. Also, setting your team formation is only the beginning; the pitch is divided up into eight sections allowing you to set the formation for when the ball is in each of those sections – when your team is in possession of the ball

To the outsider, it is easy to see why *Championship Manager* might seem as interesting as the full-time vidi-printer. However, speaking as an ardent football fan, there is nothing that comes close to this game in terms of simulating the thrills and spills of football management. Other games might have things like match highlights, bungs and stadium refurbishments, but that's not what the true football fan wants: pure and simply coaching a team and winning trophies. For the purist there can be only one choice. *Championship Manager 3* – it really is in a league all of its own. **Nick**



Transfers can now be negotiated between clubs



Every aspect of *CM2* has been improved upon. Of particular note are the tactics (left) and the new in-game commentary (centre)

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ○○○○○

With Gremlin's *Premier Manager '99* doing the rounds, it's possible. However, the processing needed for *CM3* would be too much for the PlayStation.

N64 ○○○○○

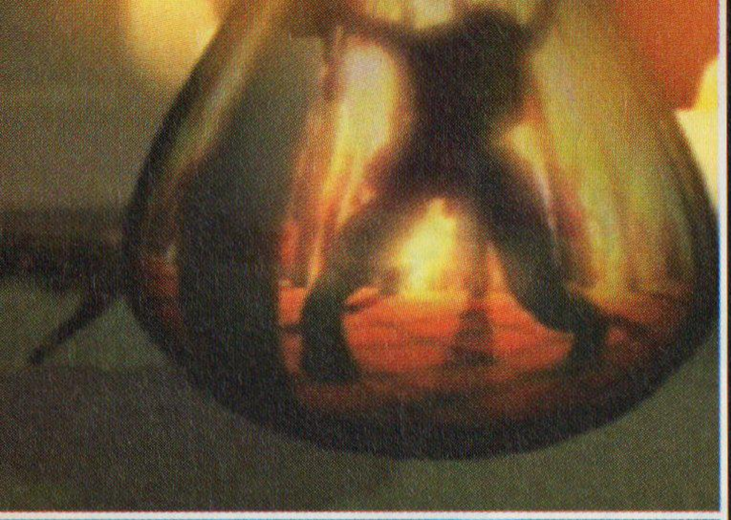
A football management sim would go down well on the N64 but, as with the PlayStation, the processing times would be too cumbersome.

Dreamcast ●●○○○

With the Dreamcast's PC heritage and 16MB of RAM you could probably just about manage it. Whether or not Eidos do is another matter entirely.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	CM3
GRAPHICS	60
SOUND	N/A
PLAYABILITY	90
OVERALL	90
Out of 100	









Akuji the Heartless

TAKING CONTROL

Graphically, *Akuji* is very impressive. The first levels are varied and open, and the game begins with the promise of learning new moves and attacks. But by the second and third levels the novelty wears off. You get the initial feeling that the game is about to get extremely good. Sadly, it never really does.

What with having his **heart ripped out** on his wedding day, then being **condemned to wander** through hell for the **rest of eternity** by his brother, it's not been a **good week for Akuji**.

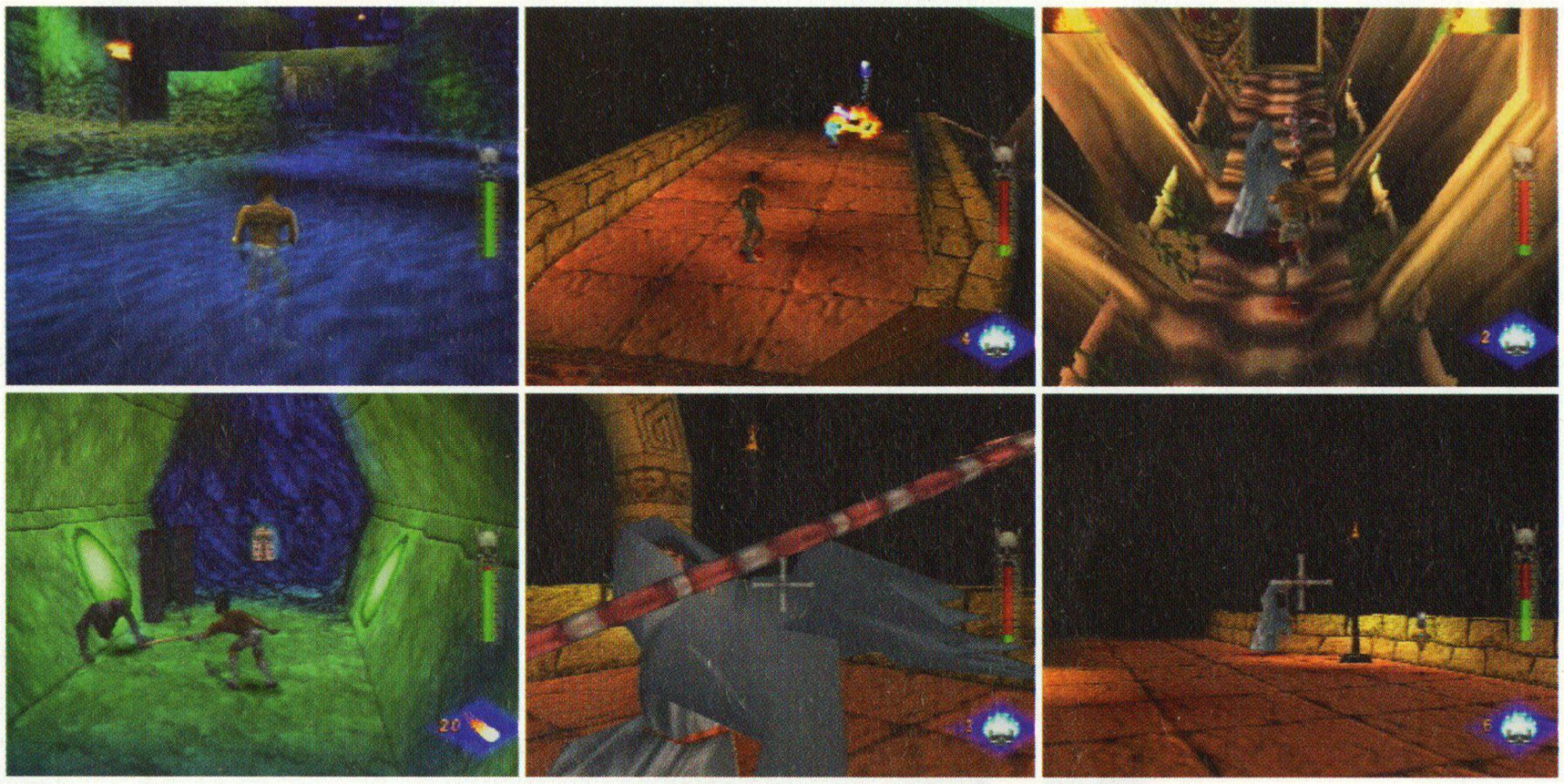
INFORMATION	
FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Eidos
DEVELOPER	Crystal Dynamics
STYLE	3D Action Adventure
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	One
ANALOGUE	Yes
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block

Eidos, having recently stormed the charts with Lara Croft's third notorious adventure, are beginning to take a very firm grip over the third-person genre. *Akuji the Heartless*, by developers Crystal Dynamics, will be followed shortly by *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*, also by the same developers. The hype surrounding *Tomb Raider III* is only just dissipating and the build-up to *Soul Reaver* is just about due to begin, but what about the one in the middle? *Akuji the Heartless*, being sandwiched between two hugely competitive releases, is going to need to be something quite special if it is to achieve any form of commercial success.

Stories before bedtime

The land of Mamora has had a troubled past. Rival tribes have waged war on one another, and the resulting devastation is beginning to take its toll on the people. In a bold attempt to create a lasting peace, your father, and ruler of one of the two dominating tribes, arranged a marriage between you (Akuji) and the daughter of the leader of your main rivals, the Tanko tribe. On the day of your wedding, your treacherous brother, Orad, decided against the idea of peace and killed you. Orad, a powerful voodoo priest, condemned you to hell by performing a ritual that involved the removal of your heart. Now you must find the spirits of your lost ancestors to guide you back to the land of the living in order to seek your revenge.

Despite the obvious similarities between this and Eidos' other aforementioned third-person games, *Akuji the Heartless* shares much more in common with Activision's excellent PC title, *Heretic II*. The style of the scenery, excellent lighting effects and range of magic puts the two games on a very similar footing. From your



Aiming is difficult when the camera doesn't follow you, leaving a side-on view, but you can shoot in first-person from a distance

portal you can jump to a selection of other worlds in your search. Upon the completion of each level a new doorway is opened, but at any time you may revisit the previous levels to look for your ancestor's spirits, most of which are hidden away out of sight. The balance is quite good – you'll need to look exceptionally hard to find them all, but this is not necessary to progress. Because it is cumulative though, spending a little bit of extra time searching on the earlier levels can save a lot of time later on as you may have to go back and replay some of the levels.

THE MOST ANNOYING PART OF THE GAME IS THE COMBAT – RUN UP TO THE ENEMY, FACE IN HIS DIRECTION AND PRESS THE ATTACK BUTTON AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE

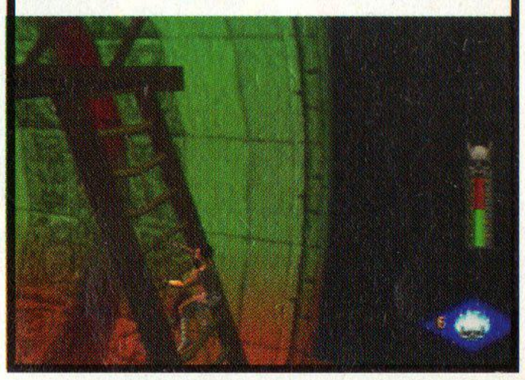
Gun-ho!

By far the most annoying part of the game is the combat. Using only a basic weapon, it is very limited; run up to the enemy, face in his direction and press the attack button as often as possible – with no defence moves it quickly becomes tedious. It's not helped by the sluggish camera, which must be constantly adjusted manually as the enemy moves around. You do have access to quite a variety of aggressive long-range magic, which is often far more powerful than your standard attack, but, again, the awkwardness of the camera and need for accuracy on the analogue pad means that you'll have a lot of difficulty shooting the enemies from a distance. You could fire from the first-person look mode, but this is also fiddly to use with a pad, and if the enemy has any projectile capability, using this will leave you vulnerable for far too long unless you are extremely accurate. The result is that killing an enemy always involves close combat even if you are using your long-range magic.

There is a lot in this game that is very good – the levels are well-designed and there are a huge variety of enemies and spells, but ultimately you find yourself playing a game that doesn't keep your interest. The gameplay quickly becomes routine, and although the story tries its hardest to keep you engrossed, it falls a fair way short. Having played both *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* and *Tomb Raider III*, it's fair to say that *Akuji the Heartless* is different enough from both to warrant the purchase of all three. Overall, this is a title that fans of the style could easily enjoy, and while the rest of us may never fall in love with the game, there's just about enough on the CD to warrant your £40. **Will**

BODY MOVIN'

Remaining true to the third-person adventure genre, Eidos and Crystal Dynamics have made sure that the move list is reasonably big. Apart from jump, crawl, and attack moves, you can climb, swing and perform various flips and so on. The animation is generally very good, but the camera angles can occasionally make pulling off some of the trickier moves unnecessarily difficult.





After completing a few levels you must face one of the many boss characters

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ●●○○○

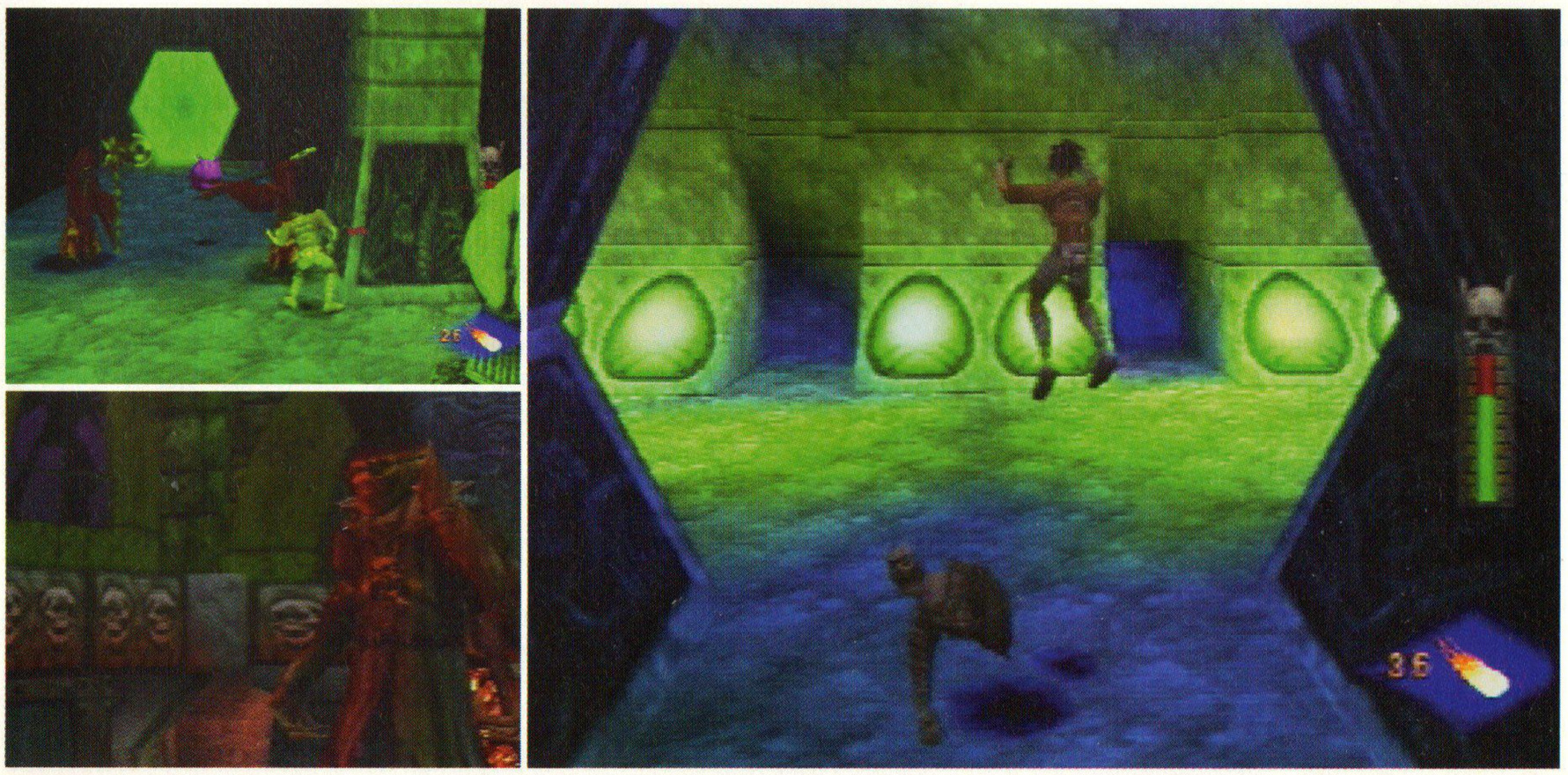
If the game is a strong seller, a conversion to the PC would be entirely feasible. Personally, though, I'd be asking for *Soul Reaver*.

N64 ●○○○○

As far as we know there are no plans for a Nintendo conversion. It seems pretty unlikely that there ever will be.

Dreamcast ○○○○○

By the time the Dreamcast arrives in the UK, *Akuji the Heartless* will be nothing more than a distant memory… probably.



The lighting effects, as these shots suggest, are some of the most spectacular to appear on the PlayStation to date

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Akuji the Heartless
GRAPHICS	80
SOUND	78
PLAYABILITY	74
OVERALL Out of 100	74

SIM CITY 3000

While the rest of us **are gearing up** for a **big party to celebrate** the **year 2000**, the Sims are getting a bit ahead of themselves. This is the latest version of the **classic from Maxis.**

TAKING CONTROL

My initial impression of *Sim City 3000* was that it didn't look too different from *Sim City 2000*. You still have the same squared-off landscapes, the blocky, slightly random-looking cities, and the desperate race against spiralling debt, but it does develop a sort of grim fascination after a while.

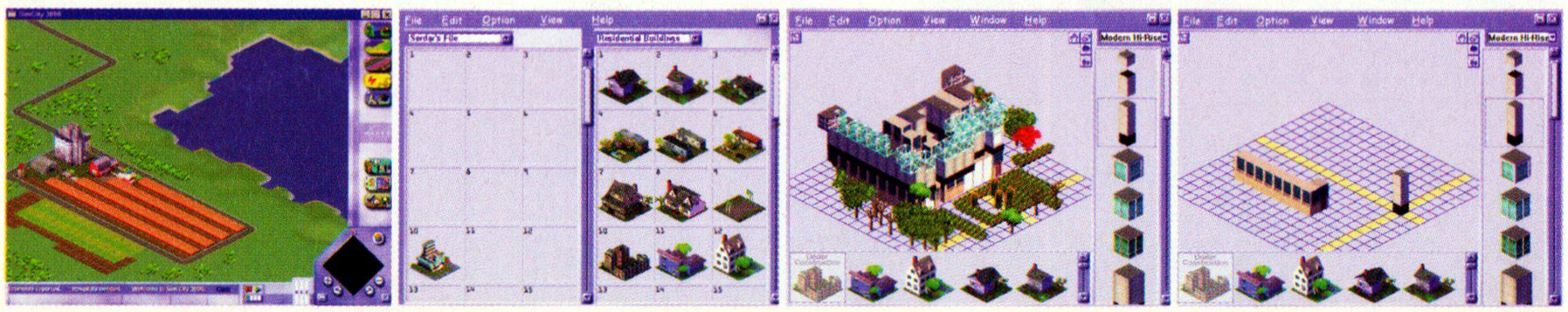
INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER	Maxis
STYLE	God Game
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	One
PROCESSOR	P166 P200
MEMORY	32MB
DISK SPACE	150MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

Having played all the previous *Sim City* games, and being a known fan of strategy games in general, I guess it was inevitable that Justin would hand me *Sim City 3000* to take a look at. I have recently played and enjoyed both *Caesar III* and *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri*, and I am being driven slowly mad by the marvellous *Anno 1602*, so I had high hopes that this latest generation of a classic line would be something really special. My initial impression was that of slight disappointment. In appearance and basic gameplay, *Sim City 3000* is virtually unchanged from the previous title in the series. It comes across not as a development of the *Sim City* idea, but a consolidation of themes from the previous games, especially its immediate predecessor, *Sim City 2000*.

Regional development zone

As in the previous game, you start with a blank landscape, and begin by building a few roads and allocating building zones. There are, as before, three types of zone – residential, commercial, and industrial. Each of these is further subdivided into three density grades. You connect up the roads, water and power supply, and then start the simulation.



There is an architecture editor which allows you to design your own buildings, but only using some pre-set components. *Sim Lego*?



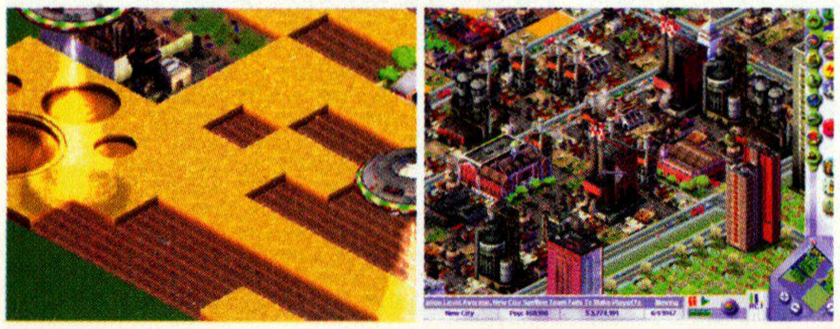
The detail of the buildings is impressive, but what are they?

At this point the computer takes over and you are left to sit and watch as 'Sims' move into your city and construct buildings. The landscape maps are simple grids, made up of layers of square blocks with a few trees dotted about. There will be some bodies of water, rivers and lakes for supply and transportation, but that is about it. There are no natural resources or food chains to worry about. Your city's industries are non-specific and homogeneous, consuming nothing but water and electricity, and producing nothing except money and pollution. As long as you have enough of each of the three zones, your city will work... at least, at first.

AS LONG AS YOU HAVE A GOOD SUPPLY OF WATER AND POWER, AND THE RIGHT BALANCE OF ZONES, THE REST OF THE GAME CONSISTS OF TWEAKING AND FINE TUNING

Tax returns

Once your population has grown sufficiently for your city to be considered to be an economy, you start to realise where the detail of the game lies. Managing the economy of the city occupies your entire time, deciding how much to tax the citizens and how much to pay the firemen. The decisions which you make about the actual building of the city are all global in nature. Apart from specific utilities such as schools, police headquarters and water pumping stations, all you decide is what sort of building will go where, not the specific buildings themselves. This lack of direct involvement kills the game for me. You will usually end up with a messy, chaotic heap of a city, or some geometrical pattern which looks boring and artificial. You can only have so much fun watching lots of little figures running about in a city which you have almost no control over. The only involvement you have with your supposed citizens is when they petition you as mayor to provide them with some new utility or to sort out the traffic congestion. This is really just a glorified help and tips function.



Once you've built a city, you can let the evil aliens loose on it

The graphics have been somewhat improved over the previous games, using the higher screen resolutions available with advanced graphics cards to run the game in resolutions up to 1024 x 768. The buildings are quite well-detailed, but nothing compared to some other titles now available. You tend to end up with lots of identical buildings, and no idea what they are or what they do. Since you have no control over what businesses go where, you don't really care either.

What you get is a graphical representation of a machine for generating money. As long as you have a good supply of water and power, and the right balance of zones, the rest of the game consists of tweaking and fine tuning. As in all the previous games in the series, traffic will soon become your number one headache, and trying to make enough money to run a public transport system will have you swearing at your monitor screen. It all makes you wonder why we live in cities anyway. It must be the nightlife...

Sleeping partner

The economics of the city are incredibly complex, and you can easily find yourself running into a wall of mounting debt. It can prove enormously frustrating to build what looks like a really cool city, only to have it fall into decay because you borrowed a little too much money early on. For most people, being chronically short of money is too much a part of the real world to provide an entertaining diversion. Every time I looked at the balance sheet for my city I was reminded of my last statement from my bank, one recollection I can well do without. I suppose that you could argue that this is supposed to be a simulation, and that it reflects the chaos theory reality of complex economic systems, but I would probably be asleep before you had finished. **Cliff**

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

There have been several good city-building games around recently, but the ones I would choose as a comparison to *Sim City 3000* would have to be *Caesar III* and *Anno 1602*. Both of these games provide a level of involvement which is missing from *Sim City*. In both games you have to provide the chains of production from raw materials to finished products, and in both games the careful planning and layout of each building in your city are crucial. They both have much better graphics as well with beautifully detailed landscapes and buildings. The other games also have well-developed economic systems, but solving the problems facing your people is a lot more satisfying, and not such an exercise in accounting. Standing against such classy opposition, *Sim City 3000* looks rather dull and uninteresting.





By contrast to some other games, *Sim* cities lack charm and character

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ●●○○○

Sim City was eventually released on the PlayStation, so it's just about possible that *SC3000* will also make the jump.

N64 ○○○○○

I'd be very surprised to see a *Sim City* game on the Nintendo console. They may have widened their user base, but not far.

Dreamcast ●●○○○

All sorts of PC games are going to find their way onto the Dreamcast. There is certainly a chance that *Sim City* could be one.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Sim City 3000
GRAPHICS	68
SOUND	55
PLAYABILITY	65
OVERALL	67
Out of 100	

Micro Machines 64

Since the old **Megadrive days**, *Micro Machines* has gone from strength to strength. The **translation into 3D** was a big success, but how will it hold **up on the N64?**

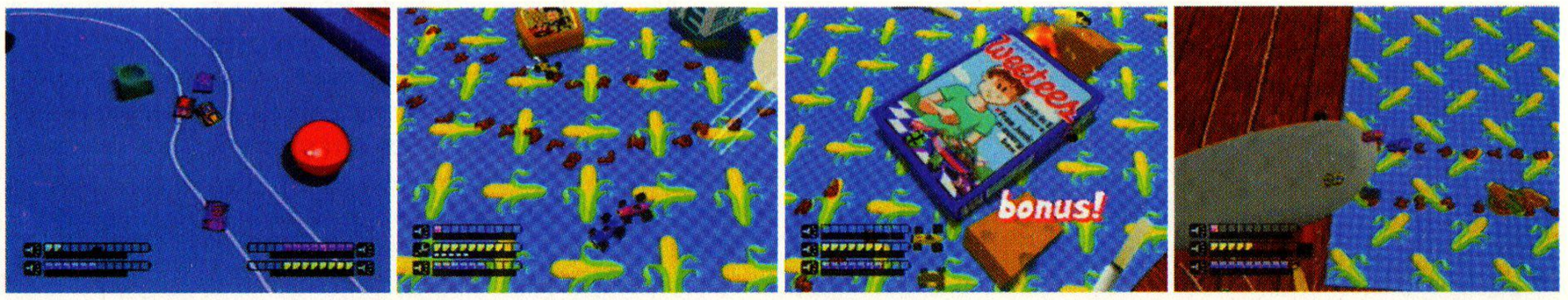
TAKING CONTROL

The gameplay that the *Micro Machines* saga has become so well known for is immediately evident in its new N64 incarnation – bright, colourful graphics, superb presentation, and a huge bump up with the aid of the analogue N64 pad.

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	Codemasters
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Arcade Racer
RELEASE	March
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-8
RUMBLE PAK	Yes
MEMORY PAK	Yes
EXPANSION PAK	No

The *Micro Machines* series began its life on the Megadrive. Its success has been great enough to carry the game forwards through multiple formats, and even now it's still going strong. *Micro Machines V3* was the first game to break the 2D barrier – released on the PlayStation two years ago, it is still a game that is often removed from the cupboard at home to accommodate those frantic multiplayer sessions. Games like these don't die easily.

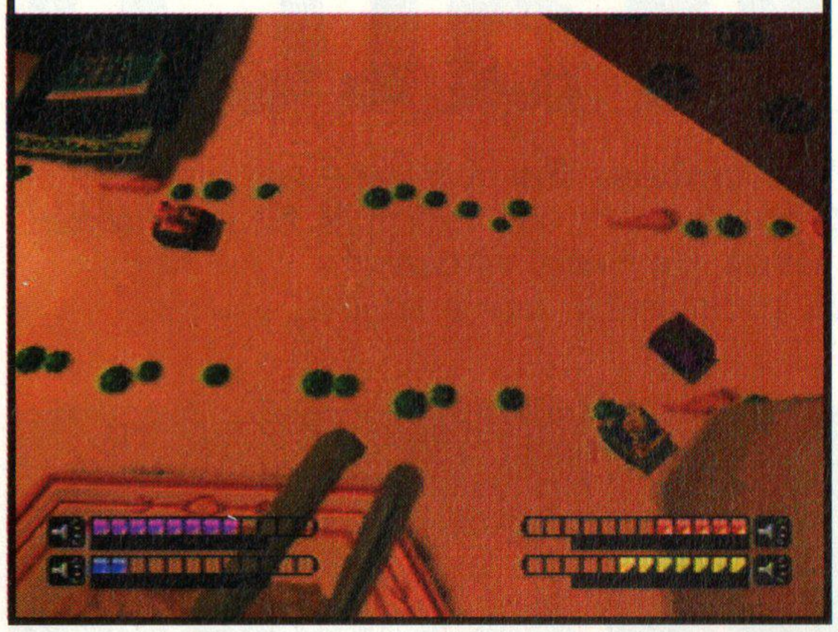
Now that game is making a long overdue transition to the N64, but with all the technological advancements made in the wait, some who have already played the PlayStation (or the PC) version may be disappointed at the apparent similarity of the titles. Overhead racers have always been a popular genre since the 8 and 16-Bit machines; what 3D third-person racers had in graphics, the top-down titles more than made up for in playability and sheer fun. One problem the genre tends to throw up today is the lack of detail in the levels and general uninspiring graphics – Codemasters have easily overcome this by default. Racing a vehicle the size of a pencil sharpener gives the programmers a huge amount of



Stray too far of the marked track and you will explode when you rejoin it, but exploring can often reward you with secret bonuses

TOMMY TANK

The variety of vehicles in the game is as impressive as that of the tracks – they all handle differently and each will take a while to get used to. By far the best of them all is the tank; with this you also have the added use of its cannon at your disposal. The other vehicles can also be powered up with bonuses found along the track such as rockets, mines, and even a huge bonnet-mounted mallet. What more could you ask for?





One of the most annoying parts of the game involves traversing two tables over a very thin bridge. You need to memorise all of the points like these

scope for interesting level design; the courses all take place over everyday terrain – school desks, snooker halls, science labs, ponds and back yards are just a few of the enormous selection. Each individual environment contains a number of separate tracks, the total number of which is colossal. Some of the areas in the game are much better than others; races that take place on desktop and snooker tables are far superior to those on the breakfast tables and beaches – a lot of this comes down to the speed at which the courses are raced. You often need to be extremely accurate, and, because of the viewpoint, you have a very limited time to make the adjustments. This usually leads to the annoying and non-arcade idea of having to learn the tracks before achieving success. It's not a problem that occurs too often, though, and if you turn the game's speed setting down too low, you'll only have trouble with certain tracks. Still, this is an inconsistency that Codemasters should have ironed out a long time ago.

THE RANGE OF MULTIPLAYER MODES ENSURES A LONG AND PROSPEROUS GAME LIFE. MICRO MACHINES 64 TURBO IS ESSENTIALLY A PARTY GAME, AND A VERY GOOD ONE AT THAT

Eight-way plug

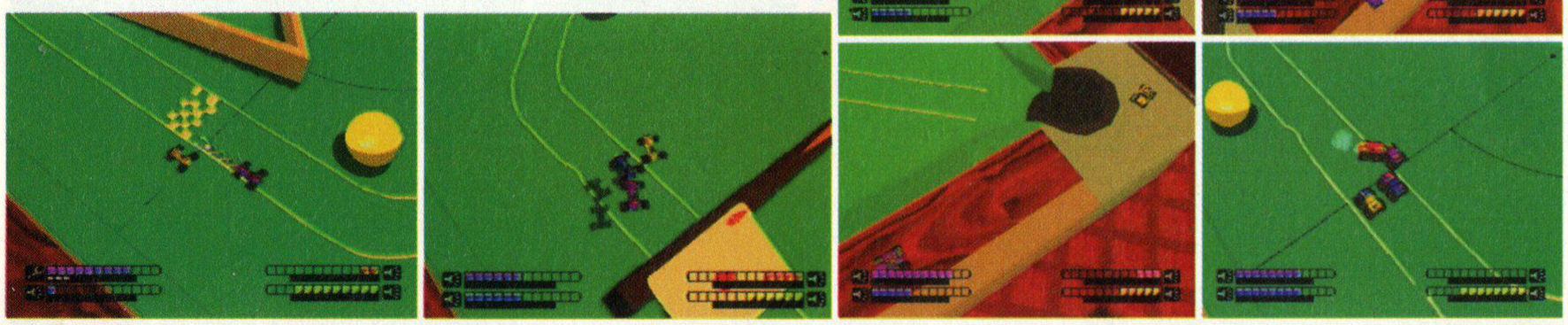
The biggest elemental gimmick to the *Micro Machine* age was its huge multiplayer appeal; this is still a major part of the game with the option of a eight-player race using pad share. The range of multiplayer modes ensures a long and prosperous game life. *Micro Machines 64 Turbo* is essentially a party game – and a very good one at that. The only problem with it is trying to get seven of your mates crowded around your TV, but that can often be equally as entertaining.

There is also a strong character element in the game – winning certain races can result in a prize car reward. These bonus cars range from high-class sports cars to troop carriers, to hippie vans, and even ice-cream vans. If you want to up the stakes on a multiplayer race, you can choose to race each other using a prize car, and the winner will take his opponent's vehicle. This is a pretty cool idea, though obviously aimed at the younger audience.

Right about now

The improvements over the PlayStation version are noticeable, but they are by no means as noticeable as you would expect for a game appearing two years later on a superior console. The graphics have been tweaked, now looking much better with some nice effects to boot. The frame rate and speed of the game on its highest setting is impressive to say the least, but when you compare it to Psygnosis' recent *WipEout 64*, the technical side of the game appears distinctly withered.

Owners of both an N64 and either a PC or PlayStation with a version of the game would be advised not to go rushing out to buy this expecting a totally different version. But if you do not yet own a copy of this classic game then *Micro Machines 64 Turbo* is the best version available so far. **Will**



The snooker table courses are a favourite of the Total CONTROL team, but most of the other tracks are equally as well-designed

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ●●●●●

The PC version has been available for the best part of a year, and should definitely be sought out if you have not yet done so already.

PlayStation ●●●●●

Micro Machines V3 has been available on the PlayStation for roughly two years. It's not quite as good, but who cares?

Dreamcast ○○○○○

Although a conversion of this particular *Micro Machines* instalment is highly unlikely, if a new series ever arose, a Dreamcast release would be a certainty.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Micro Machines 64
GRAPHICS	80
SOUND	80
PLAYABILITY	91
OVERALL Out of 100	85

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six:

Eagle Watch

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six was one of the first titles to **step away** from the formula **that *Quake* set** for the **first person shooter.** The first mission pack promises more of the same...



The quality of Eagle Watch's graphics adds a great deal to the atmosphere. The lighting, for example, works brilliantly to add to the game's already tense feeling

TAKING CONTROL

More Rainbow Six - great. Might take a little while to get used the different style of gameplay after all those *Half-Life* sessions, but should make a welcome change...

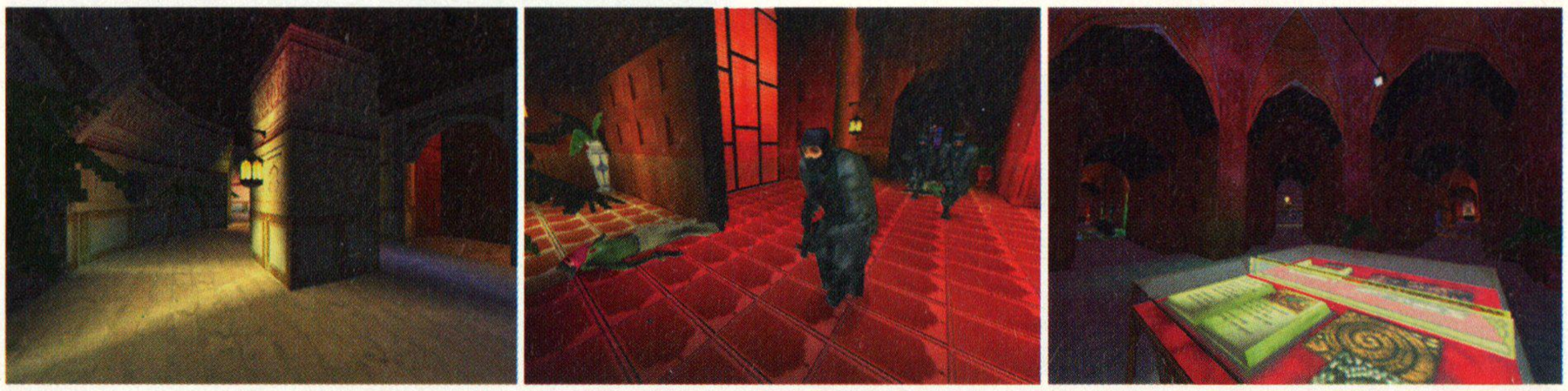
INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Take 2 Interactive
DEVELOPER	Red Storm
STYLE	First-Person-Shooter
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£17.99
PLAYERS	1-8
PROCESSOR	P166 P233
MEMORY	16MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	100MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

One of the more innovative titles of last year was *Rainbow Six*. The game took the first person genre and then (shock) did something different with it. Not content to follow the trend of trying to out-*Quake*, *Quake*, *Rainbow Six* went for an ultra realistic angle – in other words if you are shot with a bullet, it would kill you. This idea alone changed the whole approach to the game and for the first time, staying alive became more important than killing enemies did.

One man's terrorist...

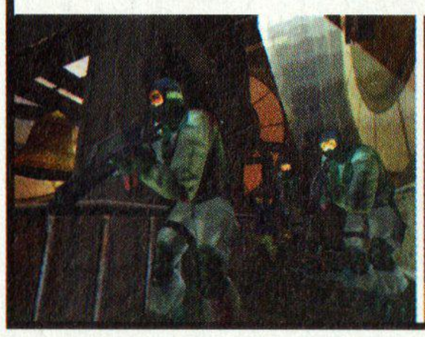
For those of you not aware of *Rainbow Six*, here's a recap: it's a first person game with a strong element of strategy and realism. The game is mission based and players take control of a team of commandos made up from the elite of the SAS, Navy SEALS and other such specialist anti-terrorist units. Because of the one hit, one kill situation, stealth becomes a priority as does planning and strategy; if you want a gung-ho shoot 'em-up then you should look elsewhere – *Rainbow Six* is the thinking man's *Quake*.

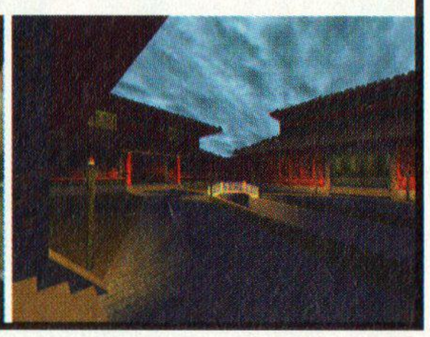


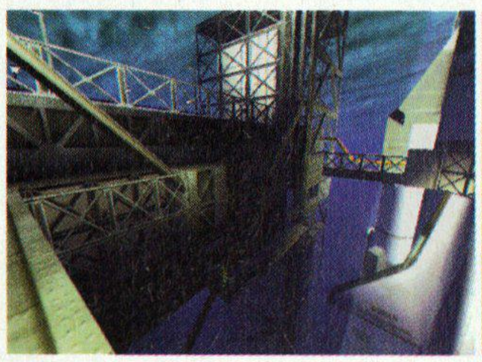
The levels take their inspiration from real life locations. The Taj Mahal (above) makes a welcome change to the usual embassy levels

REAL LIFE LOCATIONS

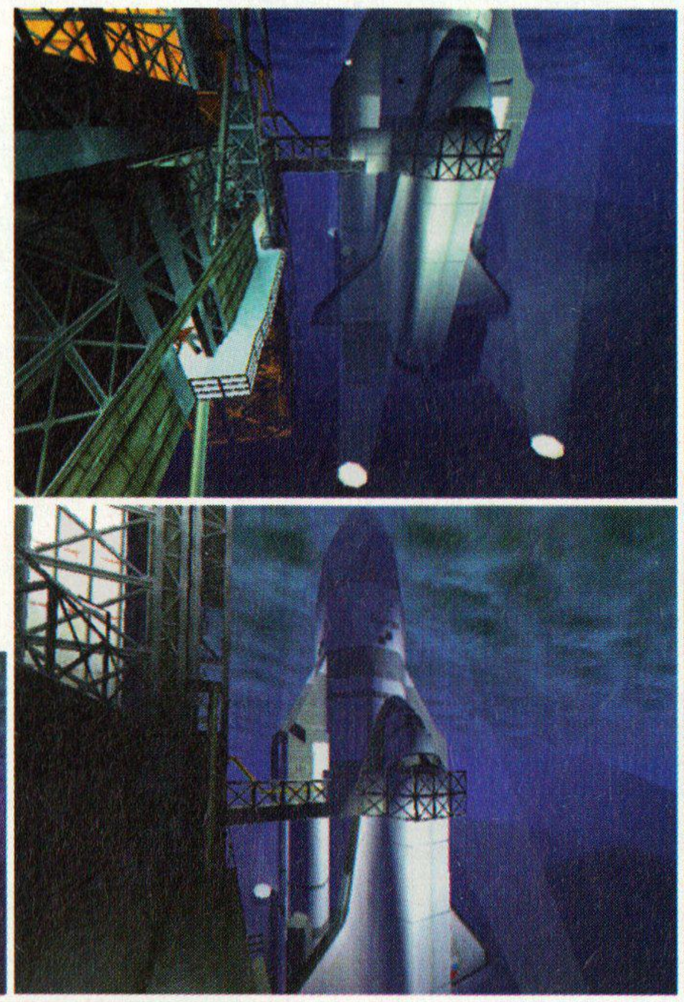
Real life locations are included for the first time in Eagle Watch and it's great fun just exploring them. Fancy a deathmatch in the Houses of Parliament or in the Forbidden City? Well, with Eagle Watch it's possible.

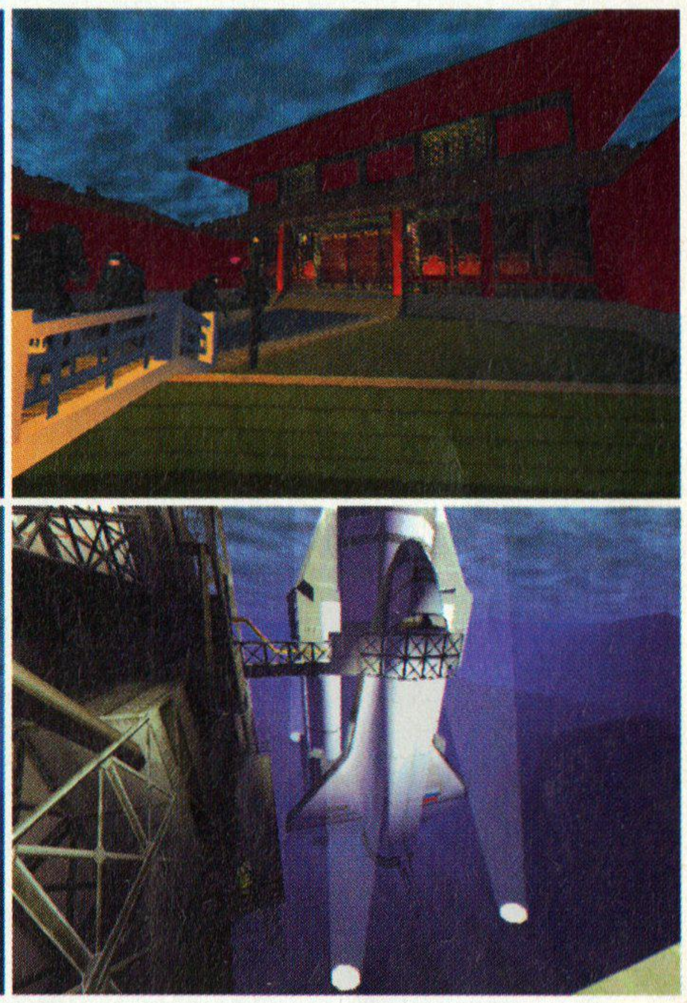












One of Eagle Watch's strong points is the atmosphere that the game generates. It's great fun just exploring levels and admiring the scenery on show

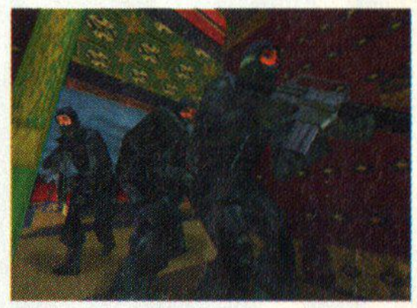
Before each mission, you are given a full briefing of your objectives and are allowed to select a number of men (and women) for the mission. Each of these has his or her own attributes and are rated on these; some have good accuracy while others are faster and others are good with bomb defusal and so forth. It is important that mission briefs are well read, as the selection of your team members is vital for your mission's success. Once team members are selected, you then have to plan your attack. You do this by splitting your team into groups and outlining waypoints and go-codes. You now have the ability to control the mission from a simple set of spoken commands, each instructing the parties to engage the enemy. The whole interface works exceptionally well, apart from the fact that the AI controlled players don't seem to be that good and considering that they are the cream of the world's anti-terrorist forces, they're a bit lame really. It is often better that you take one man in at a time which kind of defeats the whole point of teams now doesn't it? This aside, though, there is very little to fault with the gameplay of *Rainbow Six: Eagle Watch*, and the tension that has been created is quite unlike anything else.

Is another man's freedom fighter

Part of the beauty of the game is that it takes place in the real world, with real weapons and with realistic scenarios. This gives the developers a great starting point for designing the missions which take place in locations such as Cape Canaveral, the Houses of Parliament (including Big Ben) and the Taj Mahal. How many games have allowed you to run around England's highest seat of power, with machine gun in hand, attempting to rescue some dignitaries? Not too many I imagine, but that is what makes *Rainbow Six* and, indeed this mission pack, so involving.

It is this variety of missions and its different approach to the gameplay in particular that makes *Rainbow Six* better than any of its rivals. The combination of using stealth and cunning and having reactions and eye co-ordination that would test even the best *Quake* player that makes this game a winner. There is very little here that wasn't seen in the full game – a few new faces and weapons and slightly improved textures but then that's not important when the game's design is as good as this. For anyone who loved *Rainbow Six*, this mission pack will offer you a massive challenge – it's even tougher than the first and that's just on the lower skill setting. Up this setting and missions become more complex, with more objectives to be met. Oh yes, and the terrorists also become even better shots. It's true that there are only six new campaigns here but the intensity and difficulty of these is to be admired. Of course, you'll need the original *Rainbow Six* to play this excellent add-on, but if you've already sampled the delights of that then you'll not need prompting to buy this. **Nick**

IT IS THIS VARIETY OF MISSIONS AND ITS DIFFERENT APPROACH TO THE GAMEPLAY THAT, IN PARTICULAR, THAT MAKES RAINBOW SIX BETTER THAN ANY OF ITS RIVALS



Realism is the key to Eagle Watch's success – the soldiers even 'breathe'

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ○○○○○

Although *Rainbow Six* is due for the PlayStation this year, it is highly unlikely that this particular mission pack will be released for it.

N64 ○○○○○

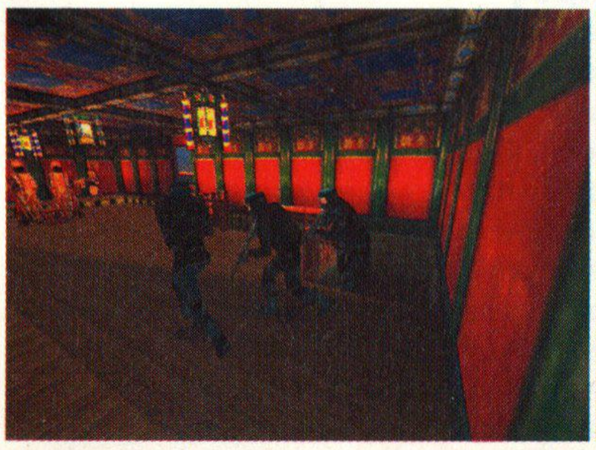
Same goes for N64 – *Rainbow Six* will be coming to your console later this year but not this mission pack.

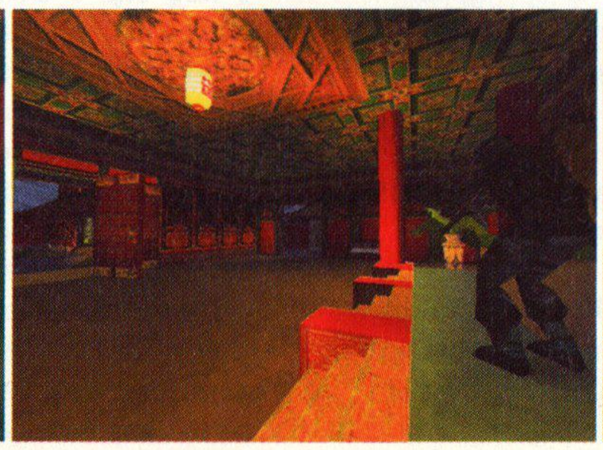
Dreamcast ○○○○○

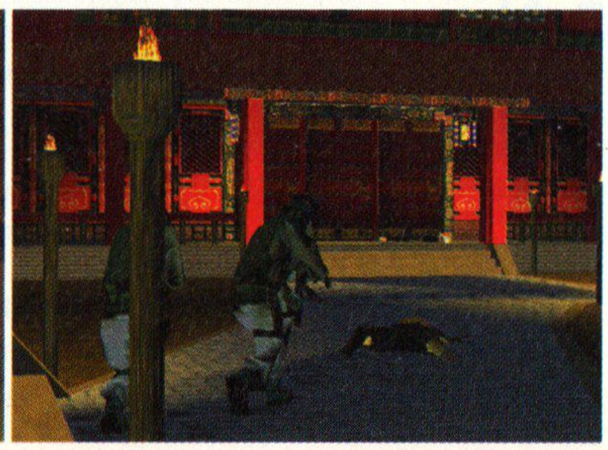
With the success of *Rainbow Six* there's a good chance for a sequel – expect this, rather than the original to appear on Dreamcast.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Eagle Watch
GRAPHICS	85
SOUND	70
PLAYABILITY	80
OVERALL	80
Out of 100	







Teamwork plays an important role in the game. Organising your men and planning your assualt correctly is vital to success

Premier Manager '99

Golden Boot? Or just the boot? **Premier Manager 99** goes under the management **microscope...**

TAKING CONTROL

When you're sacked after two friendly games because you haven't increased your squad, you start to wonder about the fairness of life. But hey – at least Gremlin have captured the entire ruthless essence of those devils in the boardroom.

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Gremlin
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Football Management
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£34.99
PLAYERS	1-4
ANALOGUE	No
DUAL SHOCK	No
MEMORY CARD	One Block

Now, I'm one of these sad footiholics who spends his Sunday afternoon down the pub watching Sky, and the rest of the day trying to emulate what I've just seen with a Playstation and a notepad. I can't get enough of it – so when a relatively established football management franchise such as *Premier Manager* comes along with its latest offering, a tingle of luke-warm excitement shoots through my joypad into my RSI damaged wrist.

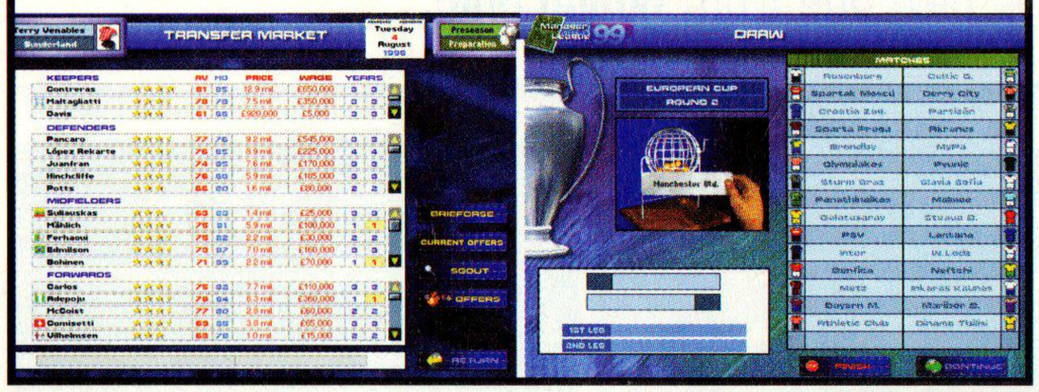
But I'm an angry man. *Premier Manager 99* is not the kind of game that one expects from the Actua team. The sparkle has gone. Where exactly is hard to say – but in footballing terms it seems to be the way of Chester City, Oxford United, and Portsmouth, and that's rapidly into liquidation.

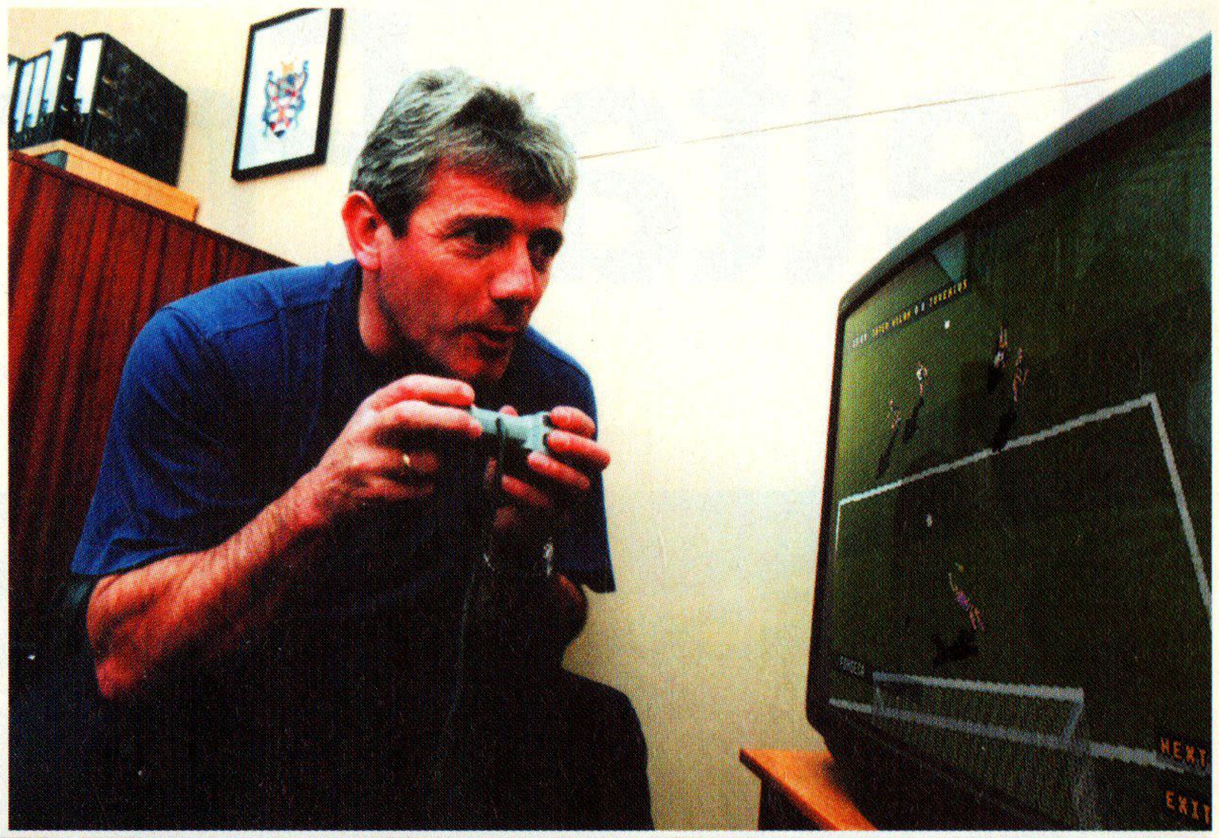
Play up Pompey

Right it's time to be specific then and first things first: Why is a non-Premiership manager endorsing the game? Forgive me if I'm wrong – but doesn't Kevin Keegan manage a second division team? Granted, they have 'loadsamoney' and aspirations that only the owner of Harrods could install, but Fulham are still two divisions away from the top-flight. Maybe I'm just being pedantic (well it is my job), but attention to detail matters. Likewise, I noticed that Portsmouth apparently play at Fratton Road. Wrong! They play at Fratton Park (for now anyway – they'll be playing the harp soon). So, please, please, please, can't somebody who actually knows something about football be employed to research these things?

THERE'S ONLY ONE BARRY DAVIES

Initial impressions of the highlights are good. Barry Davies bleats his lines out with surprising passion, and if you happen to be in another room draping your washing on the radiators, it almost sounds as though a real match is going on in your front room. Oh yes – it's all well and good for a while until you realise all the action is stored, and the same animations reappear three games later. Eventually you know exactly when you're going to score and when you're not, thus the highlights lose all appeal, and poor Barry is consigned to oblivion.













My next gripe regards the highlights. Now, you don't have to watch them – you can just skip through and see an ultra fast text-version of the match, but it's always satisfying to see how great your goals are right? So, with high hopes the match kicks off: Barry Davies sounds on good form, and the synchronisation is perfect - there's absolutely no babbling half-an-hour after the ball's in the back of the net. It all seems spot-on, with the players performing a whole host of tricks and flicks in glorious 3D. Sadly, after a couple of matches it soon dawns on you that

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WATCH THE HIGHLIGHTS – YOU CAN JUST SKIP THROUGH AND SEE AN ULTRA FAST TEXT-VERSION OF THE MATCH

the highlights are repeating themselves. Now, this is a real shame. I was literally punching the air with joy whilst watching those first few scorchers – and to be brought to earth with such a heavy bump..? Well, it's almost like being a Newcastle supporter.

Cheesy

An aspect of *PM99* that does appeal is the option to carve yourself a career in Italy. Obviously it's pretty much the same as a career in rain-soaked blighty, apart from the fact that the Italian directors are even more bombastic than the English - but hey - it's nice to have a choice. Oddly, Barry Davies' commentary also appears in the Italian league though (!?). Why couldn't an Italian commentator lend his histrionics? Or maybe somebody like channel 4's Peter Brackley?

That aside, all the usual gubbins are there: stadium improvements, ticket prices, training – you know the kind of stuff – you've seen it all before. The only real difference I can see between this and *PM98* is the updated player list. Mind you, in that department we do have a small glimmer of originality – small pictures of players actually accompany their statistics on the transfer market. Trouble is even then not all the pictures are there. It's instances like this that reveal a hint of a rush job...

One feature that does remain from early versions is the multiplayer option. Up to four players can battle it out in the league of their choice, and if you have some friends who happen to be as footy mad as you, this type of game can be extremely rewarding, especially if you happen to meet in one of the cups. Unfortunately it does take a hell of a long time to get through a season playing this way, so you better make sure you cancel all social appointments until the year 2000.

Going down?

Overall, *PM99* is big disappointment. Almost every section of the game appears good on the outside, but manages to show its true colours very quickly indeed. This is certainly a case of hopes dashed, but maybe I was expecting too much. If you have *PM98* then steer clear, this is barely different. On the other hand, if you are desperately searching for a football management game, you will doubtless forgive *PM99*'s many shortfalls. **Keith**



Players from leagues all over the world are available to buy

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ●●●●●

This version is a simultaneous release as far as we can gather. It should be on the shelves by the time you read this.

N64 ○○○○○

Gremlin's only N64 game to date is *Body Harvest*. There is certainly no version planned for the first half of this year.

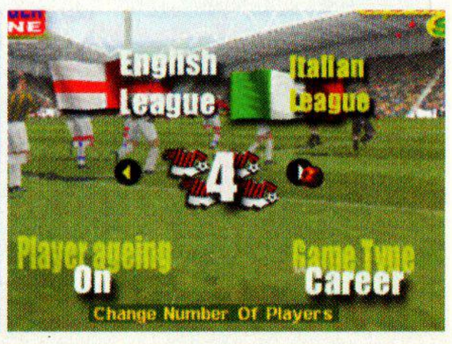
Dreamcast ○○○○○

Erm, I really don't think so, but we'll keep you informed of any surprise developments.









Enhancements include the easy to use menu screens and and admirable number of players. However, the game lacks depth

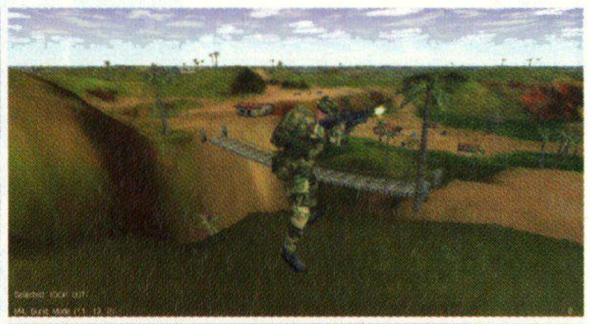
VERDICT

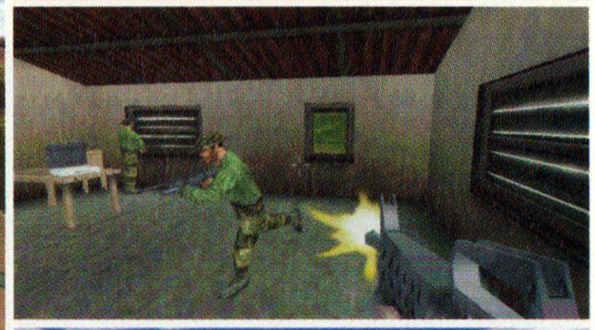
GAME NAME	Premier Manager 99
GRAPHICS	72
SOUND	84
PLAYABILITY	65
OVERALL Out of 100	68

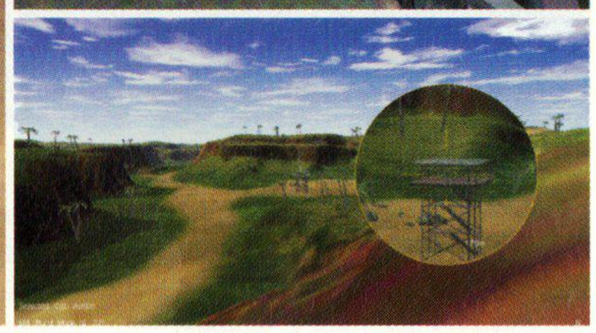
Delta Force

They may not be quite as totally nails as our **own SAS**, but Delta Force are **America's elite anti-terrorist squad**. Show them how it should be done in this new title from **NovaLogic.**









TAKING CONTROL

It is very easy to get into *Delta Force*. The essential controls you need to get going are intuitive, and at first you just play it like *Quake*. But after a quick look at the manual, you start to get a lot more out of it. Before long you are running from ditch to ditch, just like the real thing.

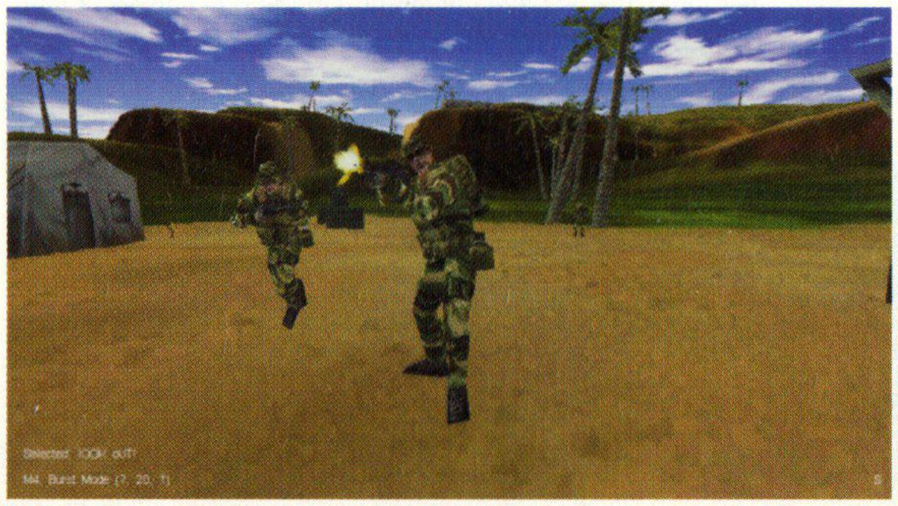
While the rest of the office have been venting their bloodlust in network games of *Half-Life*, I've been taking on more serious missions with the elite commandos of *Delta Force*. By night or day, I've wiped out drug barons, rescued hostages, and called in artillery strikes on fortified positions. Taking advantage of natural cover, I've crawled up to within a few feet of a sentry, then dispatched him with a knife, or taken out an enemy patrol with a sniper rifle at a range of over a thousand metres. I never considered myself to be the gung-ho Rambo type, but this game has turned me into a lean, mean, camouflaged killing machine.

Going to ground

There have been a couple of good first-person commando games released recently, the best of them being *Spec Ops* from Take 2, and Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six* from Red Storm, both highly regarded games. They both featured realistic weapons and well-designed missions, and they both used accelerator-friendly textured polygon graphics engines. *Delta Force* from NovaLogic is different. It also has accurately modelled weapons and missions based on real world situations, but its graphics engine is based on an entirely different technology. NovaLogic's patented VoxelSpace 3 terrain graphics system produces a landscape which is organic, realistic, and totally suited to a game of this sort. Rather than running over flat ground made up of interconnected triangles, in *Delta Force* you can hide in hollows and ditches, lie prone behind the brow of a hill, and crouch for cover in the undulations of a what looks and feels like a real landscape. Previous versions of VoxelSpace, as seen in NovaLogic's *Comanche* helicopter simulator, have been limited to 256 colours, but the third generation product has been improved to give full 16-bit colour, and the results are spectacular.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	NovaLogic
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	First-Person Shooter
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£34.99
PLAYERS	1-32
PROCESSOR	P166 P200
MEMORY	16MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	281MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Not Supported

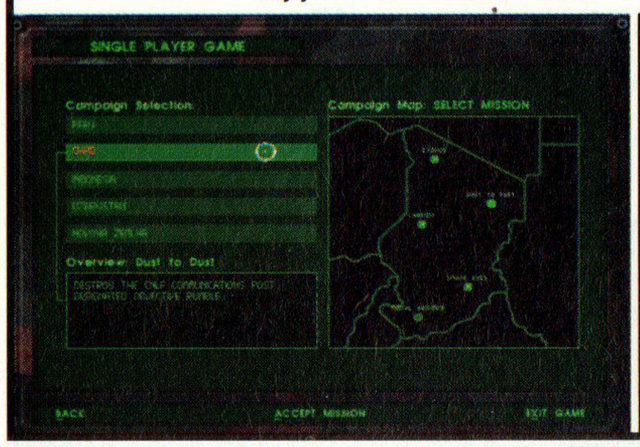


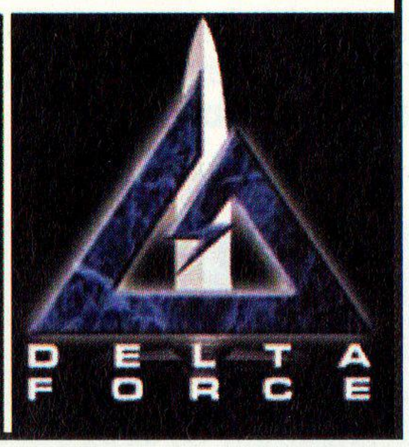


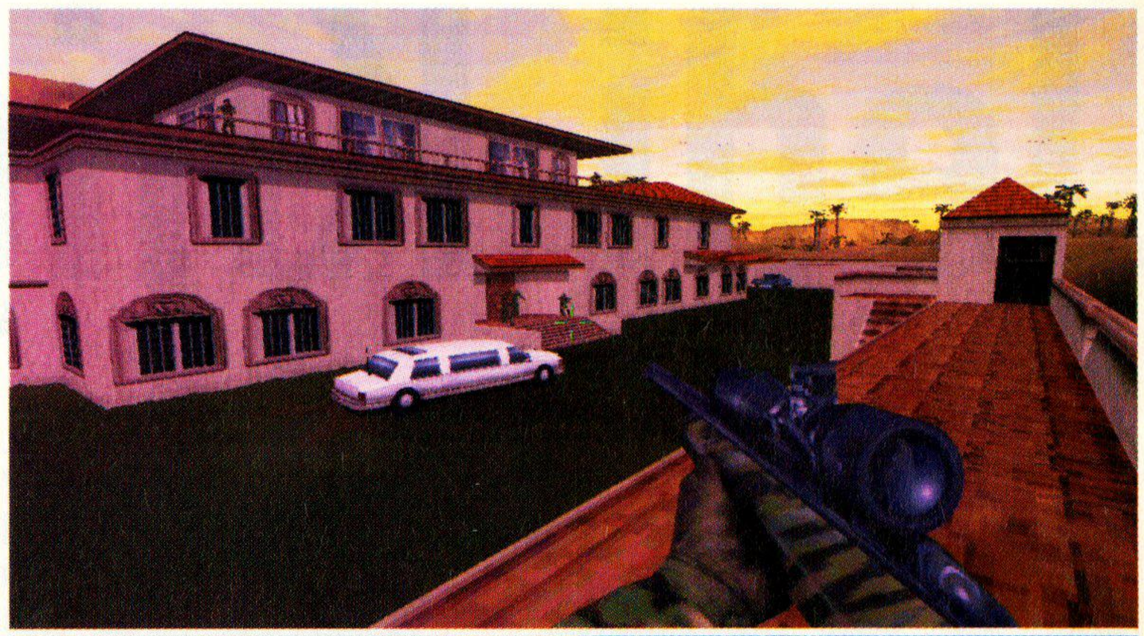
Delta Force soldiers specialise in close-quarters combat, and this game puts you right there with them in the thick of the battle

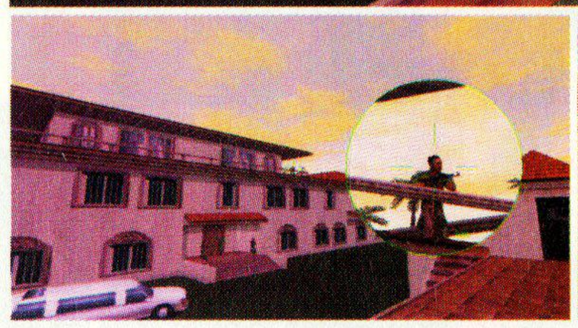
THE REAL DELTA FORCE

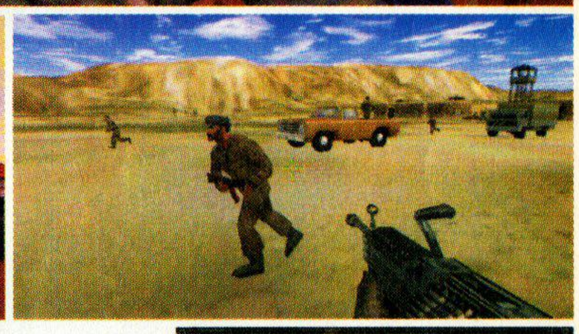
Modelled on Britain's SAS, the 1st SFOD-Delta (Delta Force) is one of three counter-terrorist groups in the United States Federal Government, although The Pentagon refuses to officially acknowledge their existence. It was founded in 1977 by Colonel C.A Beckwith, who had been assigned to the SAS during the early sixties. Their operatives are volunteers from the U.S. Army, mainly from the Special Forces Green Berets and Rangers units, and are trained at their main headquarters in a remote area of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. There are rumoured to be up to 2,500 personnel at this facility, which is considered to be the best special operation training facility in the world. The Close Quarters Battle indoor training range has earned the ominous nick-name, 'The House of Horrors'. There are mock-ups of trains and buses for practice in tubular assaults, and there is reported to be a section of a wide-body jet in the 'aircraft room'.

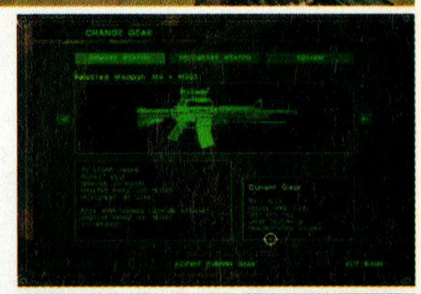


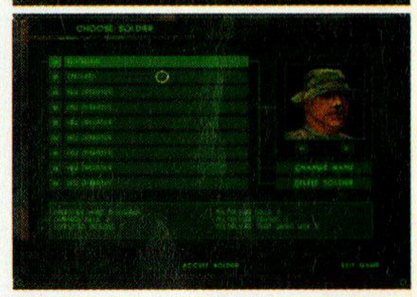












You have the final say over which weapons you will take on your next mission

Home on the range

The voxel-based system is unfortunately incompatible with 3D accelerator boards, but this is outweighed by the benefits of the system. Due to the memory requirements of the texture maps, in most textured-polygon systems there is a limit to how far you can see in the 3D world, and beyond that distance you will see only fog or emptiness. In many games this range is the equivalent of only seventy metres. In *Delta Force* you can see literally for miles. The voxel system is a lot less memory-dependent, so the entire huge map can be rendered at once. One of the weapons in the game is a powerful sniper rifle with a range of fifteen hundred metres, and you can really use it at that range. The targets may be small at such a huge distance – even with the telescopic sight – but you can still hit them.

NOVALOGIC'S PATENTED VOXELSPACE 3 TERRAIN GRAPHICS SYSTEM PRODUCES A LANDSCAPE WHICH IS ORGANIC, REALISTIC, AND TOTALLY SUITED TO A GAME OF THIS SORT

Unfortunately, this also means that they can hit you as well, so remember to keep your head down if you want to keep it on your shoulders.

The art of not being seen

The characters moving in this sophisticated terrain are fully motion-captured. You can play *Delta Force* from either first or third-person viewpoints, and if you are watching your character or the enemy soldiers moving about, you cannot help but be impressed by the quality of the animation. You have a number of movement options – you can stand, walk or run (either fully upright or in a crouch), or lie prone and crawl on your belly to keep a low profile. Stealth plays a big part in this game – with your camouflage you can sneak right up to an enemy and take him down quietly with a knife. If you lie still, even a sentry who looks in your direction may miss you.

The AI controlling the enemies is very good, and gets sneakier still on the harder game settings. Enemy patrols will vary their routes, and sometimes double back and surprise you. The line of sight programming also works very well. If you silhouette yourself against a skyline, you will be spotted at a much greater distance than if you sneak down a hillside taking advantage of the cover.

Choose to accept it

After a while, you get the knack of playing the game the way it was meant to be played. Each mission is carefully designed, and although challenging, they are possible. You have a lot of flexibility in the execution of your missions since only the goals are fixed. You have the freedom to select which weapons you will take, and once on the ground you have complete freedom to ignore the assigned route and pick your own path to the target. As long as the mission objectives are met, it doesn't matter if you don't engage the enemy at all. In fact, the less contact you have with hostile forces the better. This isn't a *Quake* clone, and you don't have to run in with all guns blazing. There are no health pick-ups, and a couple of shots will kill you very dead, just like in the real world.

You also have to remember the other members of your team. In the single player game, you will have several computer-operated team-mates who will move into supporting positions and give you covering fire. In the multiplayer game, playing over NovaLogic's NovaWorld server, you can play alongside or against over thirty other players.

This is a highly addictive game which doesn't need a monster PC to deliver a huge amount of fun. **Cliff**

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ○○○○○

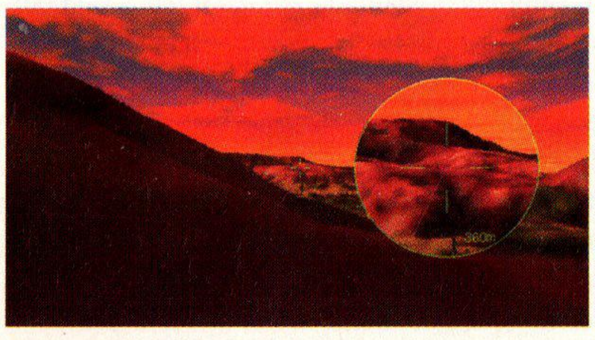
Impossible, I'm afraid. The dedicated 3D hardware inside the old grey box is incompatible with a VoxelSpace engine.

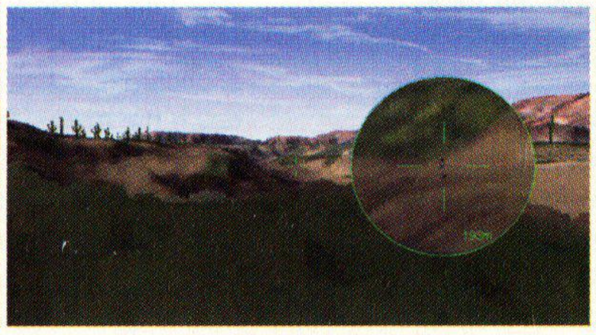
N64 ○○○○○

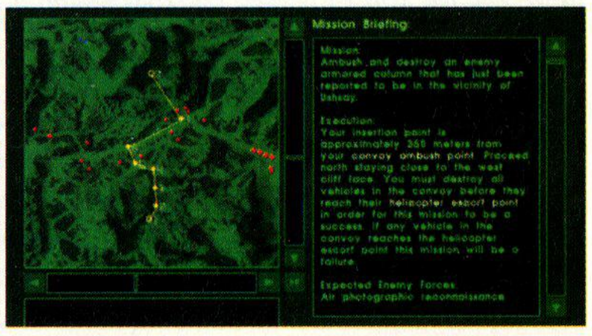
Again, not a chance, and for the same reason. Dedicated chipsets need a particular type of 3D programming to work.

Dreamcast ●●○○○

Hmmm... Well it's a million to one, but it just might work. The superior power of the Dreamcast could win again.







The full sixteen-bit palette gives the graphics superb depth and realism, and the Voxel engine makes the terrain much more lifelike

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Delta Force
GRAPHICS	86
SOUND	82
PLAYABILITY	88
OVERALL	85
Out of 100	

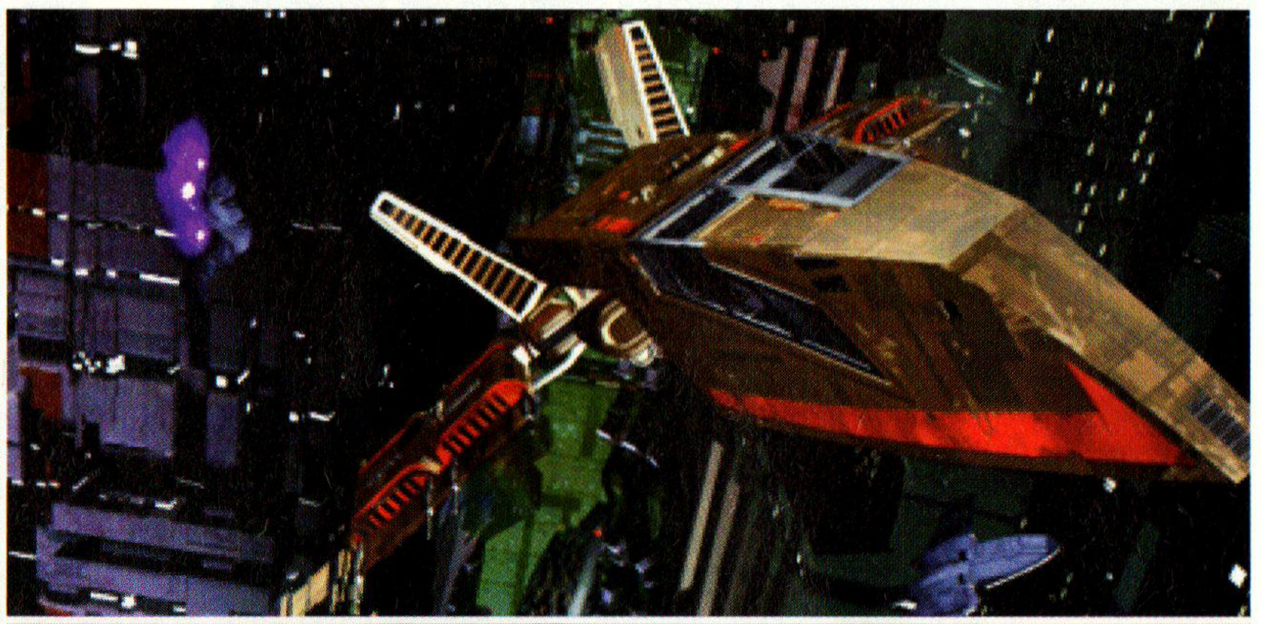
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

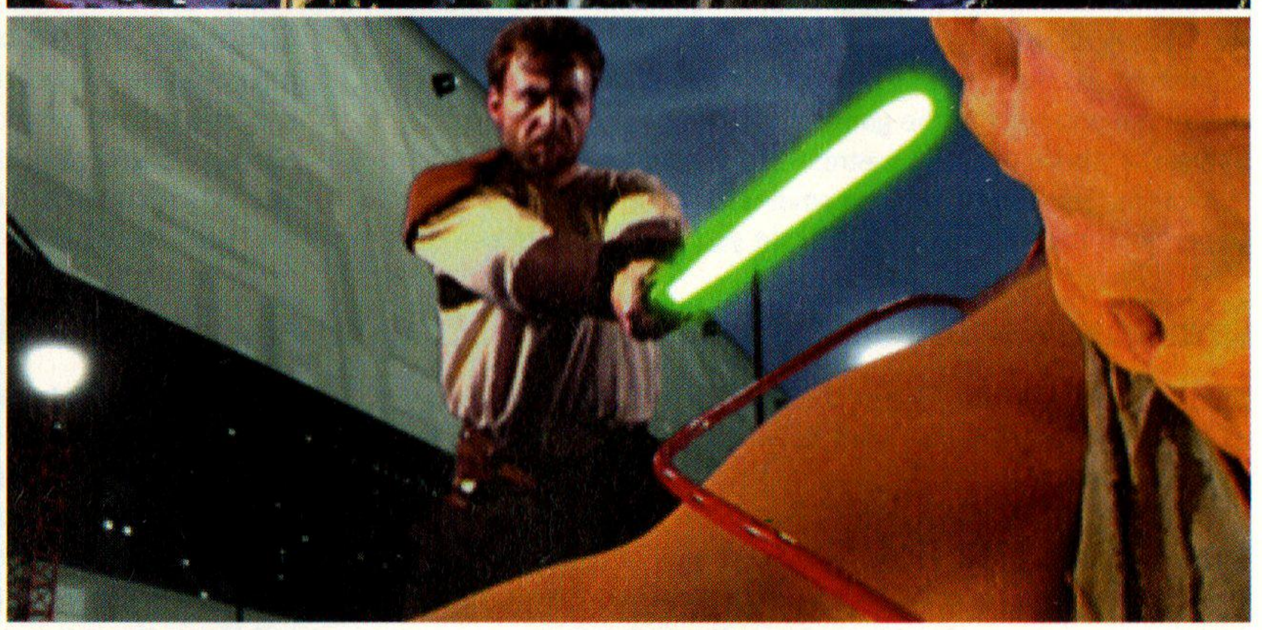
TAKING CONTROL

Ten minutes in and you're wondering why has this been re-released at full price – surely *Half-Life* is more than enough for people to be getting on with? And then you realise it's a Star Wars game, and suddenly everything is all right again...

With the **recent re-release** of these **classic Star Wars** titles, you'd think that there was a **new film** just around the corner... There is? Oh, I must **be the only one** who hasn't **heard about it**...







INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Activision
DEVELOPER	LucasArts
STYLE	First-Person Shooter
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£29.99
PLAYERS	1-8
PROCESSOR	P133 P200
MEMORY	16MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	150MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

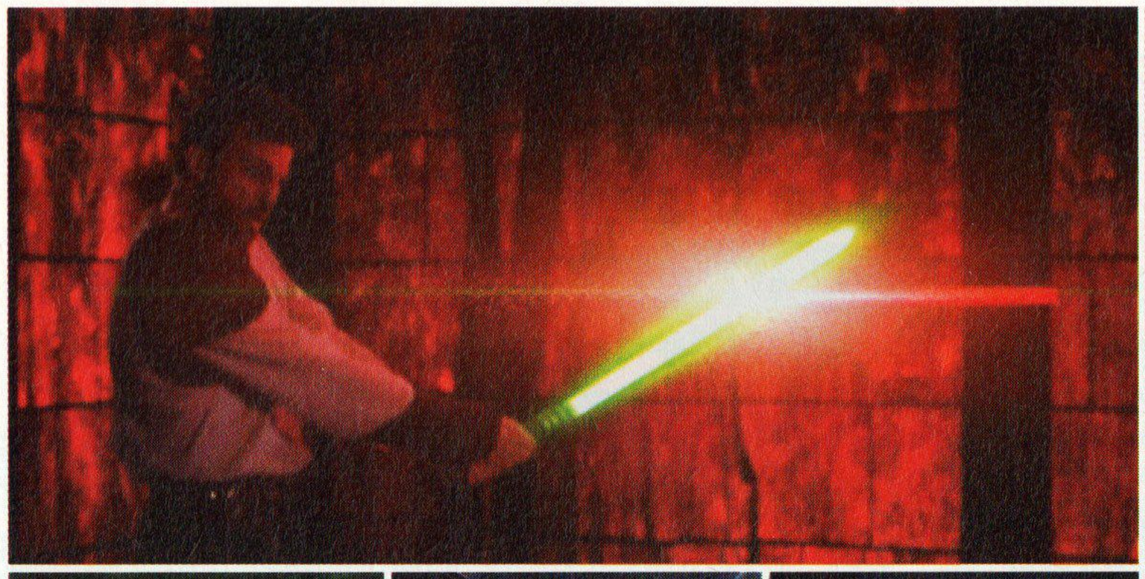
With all the quality first-person shooters around at the moment, it seems a little strange that Activision would want to release a (relatively) dated game in the same genre. It seems even stranger when you realise that this repackaging of *Jedi Knight* is full price and you can already obtain this sequel to *Dark Forces* on budget. However, the main selling points here are that the game is a) a Star Wars license and b) comes packaged with a mission pack: *Mysteries of the Sith*.

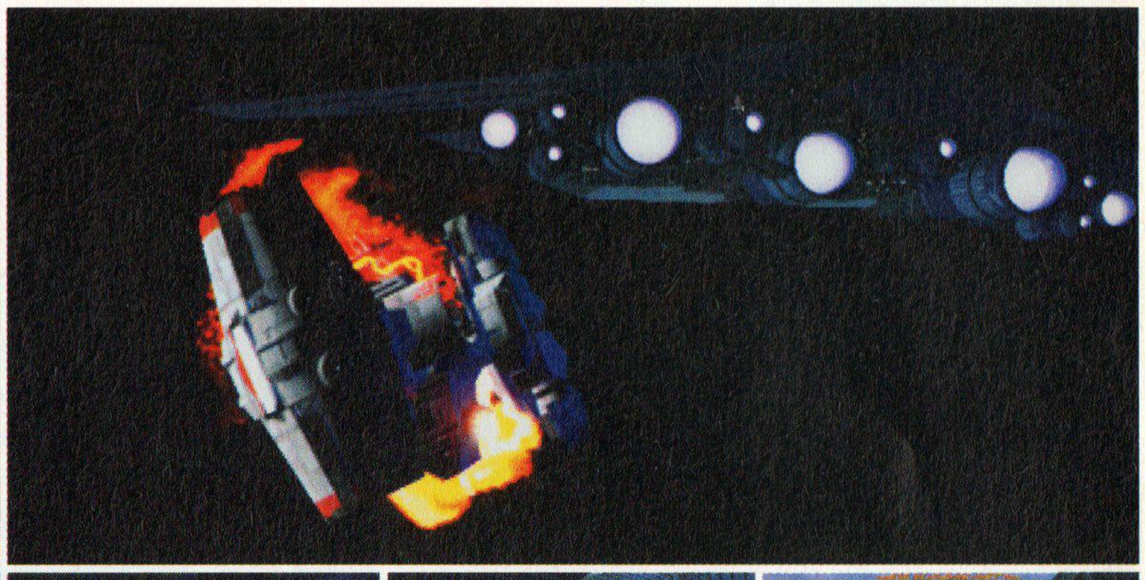
Jedi Knight begins a short time after the end of *Dark Forces* and sees the return of that game's hero, Kyle Katarn. As the game begins, you learn that your father has been murdered by Jerec, one of seven dark Jedi, who is on a quest to uncover a lost Jedi burial ground and unlock the Force energy of a thousand dead Jedi. Obviously, he has to be stopped, and you are the one chosen to hunt him and his allies down.

A walk on the dark side

This is the big difference between this game and its peers – it allows you to learn and use Jedi powers. What powers you learn depend very much on which path you take – the dark side or light side of the force. Good powers include abilities like heal, persuade and pull, while the dark side offers lightning, Vader's famous grip move and deadly sight (hurts anyone in your field of vision). After each level you are awarded a number of force points. These can be allotted to whichever ability you choose. This choice determines whether or not you take a walk down the dark side.

The game itself is designed as level-based, with each level demanding that players meet a certain number of objectives. These vary from simply reaching a place to collecting objects and meeting people. This is one of the endearing features of *Jedi Knight*; it does, to a certain extent, make you use your brains a bit. As such, this game could not be described as

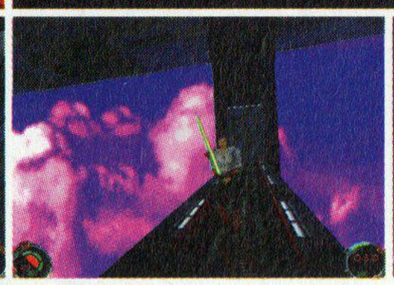
















Whilst the game environments lack the detail of *Half-Life*, the levels are large and, best of all, feature many of the scenes from the films linear and is closer to *Half-Life* than *Quake II* in that respect.

The strong storyline of both of the titles is something that sets the game aside from the rest of the stuff on the market; it's not long before you become once more embroiled in another Star Wars fable. The whole feeling is more akin to the comic books rather than the films, but then with no more films until the summer, this will do for now. Commendably, the game manages to recreate the Star Wars universe without too many samples from the films – something which LucasArts are prone to doing with these games.

Laugh it up, fuzzball

The downside of *Jedi Knight*, as is the case with all re-releases, is that graphics have moved on a fair bit in the 18 months since it was first released. At the time, before *Quake II*, this was state of the art stuff and had a few games journos describing it as the best-looking game ever. Nowadays, though, the texture detail is poor, as are the character models, and on the whole the game looks a little shabby and devoid of details. *Jedi Knight* doesn't look that bad, but by today's *Half-Life* standards it is more than a little way behind.

However, *Jedi Knight*'s big advantage over all of its competitors is that it is a Star Wars game. We must have said this before, but a Star Wars license can add a great deal to a game – especially when it is done this well. Interestingly, *Jedi Knight*'s cut scenes are a mixture of both live footage and CG animations and, although a little cheesy, are a welcome addition, underlining of the game's heritage.

One of the big parts of *Jedi Knight* is the multiplayer game. After the success of *Quake* on-line, LucasArts have attempted to surpass that game, adding a host of new features. Your Jedi powers play a big part here, and as such the game offers a distinctly different experience to that of *Quake* et al. And despite the game's age, there are still enough fans to fill some decent enough servers – well worth a bash if you have on-line capabilities.

THE PACKAGE OF THE ORIGINAL GAME AND THE MISSION PACK IS NOT EXCELLENT VALUE FOR MONEY, BUT IT IS A GREAT BUY IF YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED THESE BEFORE

At the time of its release, *Jedi Knight* was an excellent game. By today's standards it is still very good and offers an extremely immersive Star Wars experience. The Jedi powers give the game a depth unrivalled in the genre, and although the graphics are dated, *Jedi Knight* still manages moments that will wow the player. The package of the original game and the mission pack (more of the same but with better graphics) is not excellent value for money, but it is a great buy if you've never played these before. Star Wars nuts will love it! **Nick**

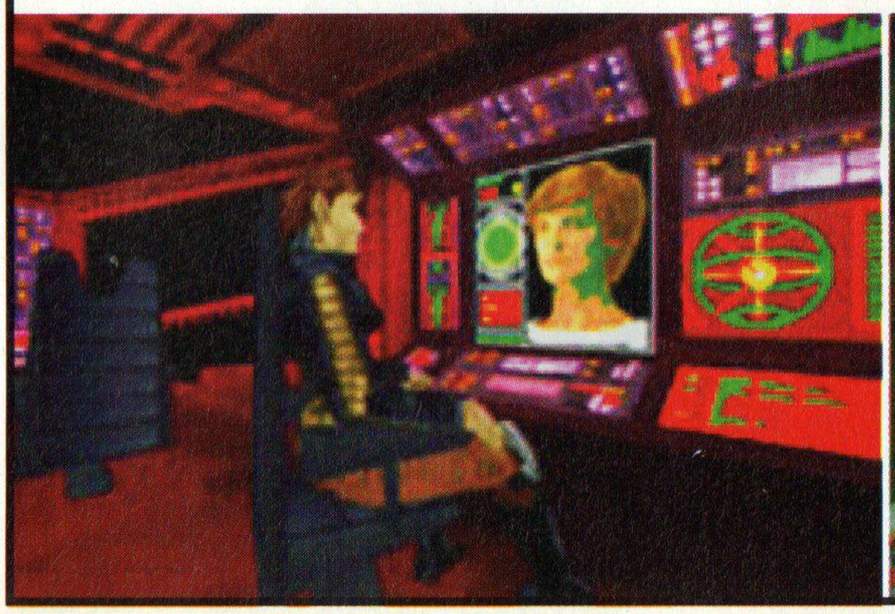




Many of your favourite Star Wars vehicles pop up from time to time

MYSTERIES OF THE SITH

As a bonus to the main game, Activision have bundled the excellent mission pack, *Mysteries of the Sith*. This is really another *Jedi Knight* game in itself, only this time the player takes control of both Kyle and Mara Jade. The story follows the theme of Kyle's temptation by the dark side and Mara's rescue.





OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ●○○○○

Dark Forces made a (ahem) sloppy appearance on the PlayStation, but this is very unlikely to be released.

N64 ●○○○○

Pretty much the same goes for N64, but then you've got two exclusive Star Wars games to look out for when the new movies arrive.

Dreamcast ○○○○○

Too old for the Dreamcast, but don't be surprised if you see *Dark Forces III* on Sega's console.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Jedi Knight
GRAPHICS	70
SOUND	80
PLAYABILITY	75
OVERALL Out of 100	75



Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

CONTROL 90+ AWARD

The **second sequel** to the classic ***Civilization*** has arrived, and though **Activision** may have the name, **Sid's still got** the gameplay.

TAKING CONTROL

Having played *Civilization I* and *II* more than any other game, I naturally found it easy to get into *Alpha Centauri*. But having said that, I don't think anyone would have a problem with it. You start off on the easy stuff, but you keep finding new bits. The game is a delight to play, and just as hard to put down as the original.

INFORMATION

FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER	Firaxis
STYLE	Turn-based Strategy
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-6
PROCESSOR	P150 P266
MEMORY	16MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	100MB 350MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Not Supported

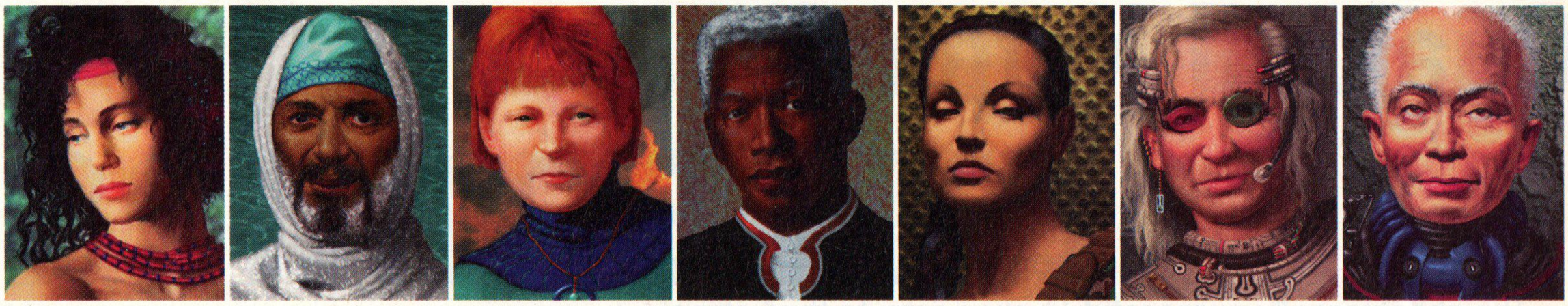
I often think that the world would be a better place if we were to round up all the lawyers, drop them down an abandoned mineshaft, and leave them to spend the rest of their lives happily suing each other. In an act of unmitigated stupidity, a bunch of fools in pinstripe suits have decreed that since Sid Meier and Brian Reynolds split from Microprose, they can't call their new game *Civilization III*. Activision, who are the new owners of Microprose, have been granted the rights to that title which they have used for their own attempt at a sequel, *Civilization: Call to Power*. It's not a bad game as far as it goes, but they're not fooling anyone. *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri*, developed by his own company Firaxis, is unmistakably the true heir to the *Civilization* crown, and all the corporate lawyers in the world can't change that.

To boldly split infinitives

The original *Civilization* was released back in 1991, and I would guess that the majority of our readers have played either that game or the first sequel, which came along in 1996. The classic theme of building cities, developing new technologies, and guiding



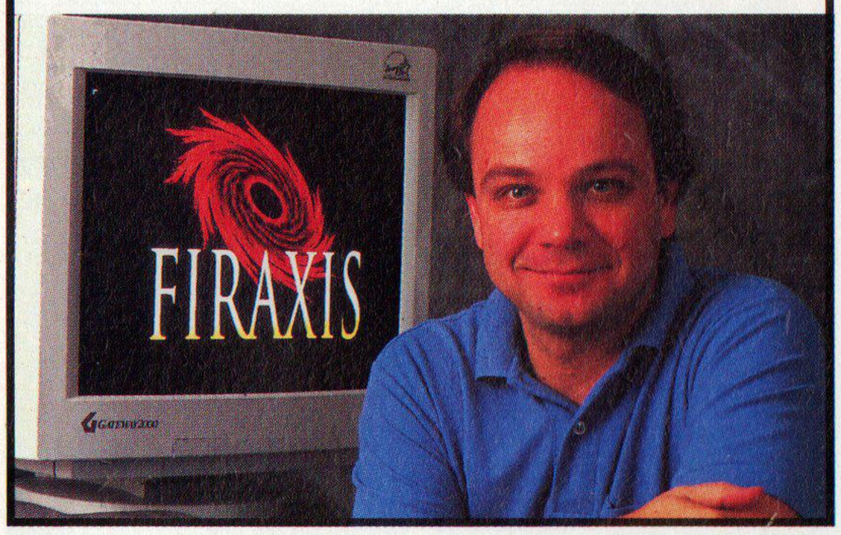
The design workshop enables you to create your own special vehicle designs and then upgrade your existing units to the new spec



These odd-looking characters are the seven faction leaders. You will meet most of them during the course of the game, in the planetary council and over the phone

SID MEIER GAMEOGRAPHY

1984 Solo Flight
1984 Hellcat Ace
1985 Silent Service
1985 NATO Division Commander
1985 Conflict in Vietnam
1985 Crusade in Europe
1985 Decision in the Desert
1987 Sid Meier's Pirates!
1987 Red Storm Rising
1988 F-19 Stealth Fighter
1989 Gunship
1990 Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon
1991 Sid Meier's Civilization
1991 Sid Meier's Covert Action
1993 CPU Bach
1994 Sid Meier's Colonization
1995 Sid Meier's CivNet
1997 Sid Meier's Civilization II
1997 Magic: The Gathering
1997 Sid Meier's Gettysburg



your growing culture through six thousand years of human history is what make the games so utterly addictive, and that theme is recapitulated and expanded upon in *Alpha Centauri*. The storyline takes up where *Civilization* left off, with the arrival of the first human colonists on a planet orbiting out nearest stellar neighbour.

All did not go well on the colony ship. The hibernation system was damaged, and the crew awoke early. The seven expedition leaders disagreed over which course of action they should take, and as a result the colonists split into seven different factions, each with their own political agenda. You have the Greens, the Despot, the Scientist, the Mogul, the Survivalist, the Fundamentalist, and the Humanitarian. These factions split up shortly after landing, each one forming their own independent colony in different locations. You choose which of the factions you wish to play, and once again guide your chosen ones through the development of a planetary culture.

ALPHA CENTAURI ALLOWS YOU TO DESIGN IMPROVED UNITS AS NEW TECHNOLOGIES BECOME AVAILABLE, BUILD PROTOTYPES, THEN UPGRADE EXISTING UNITS TO THE NEW SPECIFICATION

Automatic for the people

Many gameplay elements have been carried over from *Civilization II*, such as the isometric zoomable map view and unit hit-points, but *Alpha Centauri* also has many great new features. One, which makes the game a lot easier to play, is the addition of an optional AI 'Governor' for each city. You can, if you wish, bias the production of units and facilities towards your chosen goals, and then leave the city to run itself automatically. This approach works well if you are more into military conquest than science and technology, as you can concentrate on tactics and not worry about the cities.

The option to use AI automation is present in many other aspects of the game. The 'Formers', vehicles which do the job of Settlers or Engineers from the previous games, can also be set on automatic, and will trundle about building roads, farms and energy collectors while you get on with the important stuff.

Made to measure

One excellent new feature is the Design Workshop, where you can custom-build new units. *Civ II* was criticised for having too many different military units, which then became obsolete almost as fast as you could build them. *Alpha Centauri* circumvents this problem by allowing you to design improved units as new technologies become available, build prototypes, then upgrade existing units to the new specification. There are choices of chassis, power plant, weapons, armour and special features, from which you can construct unique vehicles for special jobs.

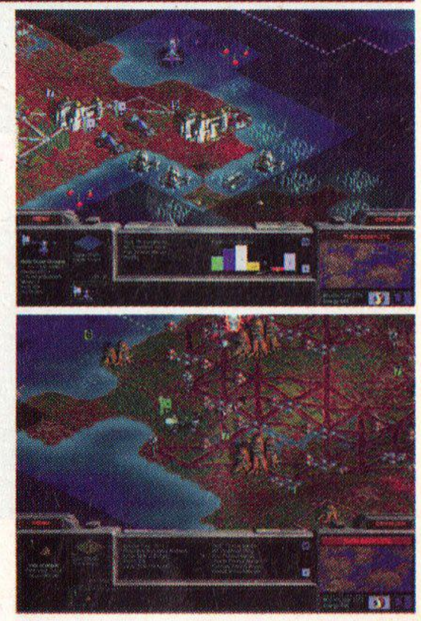
Another bonus over *Civilization II* is the inclusion of a good range of multiplayer options. *Alpha Centauri* can be played over the Internet or a local network with up to six other players.

Maps of distant lands

The game maps are fully three-dimensional with an isometric perspective, and are highly detailed. This looks great, but during battles the undulating landscape can be confusing, so there is an option to flatten the map so that it resembles *Civ II*. You can also toggle the map grid on land and water, and at last you can, if you wish, see the city area boundaries on the playing map. If you play a random map, you get a choice of five different sizes, which affects the length of the game. If you play on the largest size, expect to be busy for a month or more.

The details of the map are superb. The city icons actually look like futuristic cities, and each faction has a unique design. There is no option for a close-up view of the city as there was in the previous two games, but there is really no need for it. You can see what your city looks like clearly enough on the main map. The landscape textures are also excellent, with a good range of colours and more detail than in most games. Even fully zoomed in, everything still looks good. *Alpha Centauri* is a truly great game, and a worthy successor to its classic predecessors. **Cliff**





Water, water everywhere, but it's full of weird alien beasties, so be careful

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ●●○○○

Civ II is supposed to be appearing on the PlayStation sometime soon, so I guess EA will wait and see how that does before commiting to a conversion.

N64 ○○○○○

Hardly the sort of thing that will appeal to the majority of Nintendo owners. But then who would have guessed that *Sim City* would appear on the SNES?

Dreamcast ●●○○○

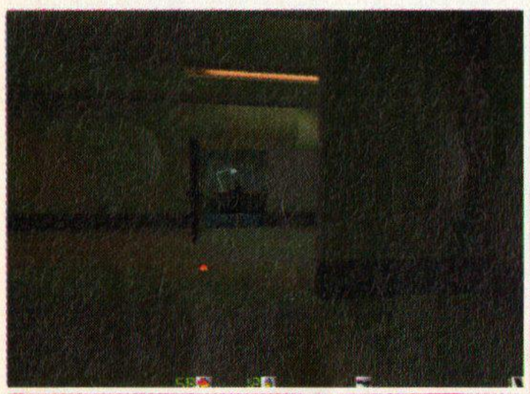
There are a whole load of games destined for Dreamland, and there's no technical reason why *Alpha Centauri* couldn't be one of them.

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Alpha Centauri
GRAPHICS	83
SOUND	77
PLAYABILITY	92
OVERALL Out of 100	90

Quake II Netpack: Extremities

The **phenomenally successful** *Quake II* gets its third official add-on pack, but can a selection of **new multiplayer mods** repair the **damage caused by *Half-Life*?**

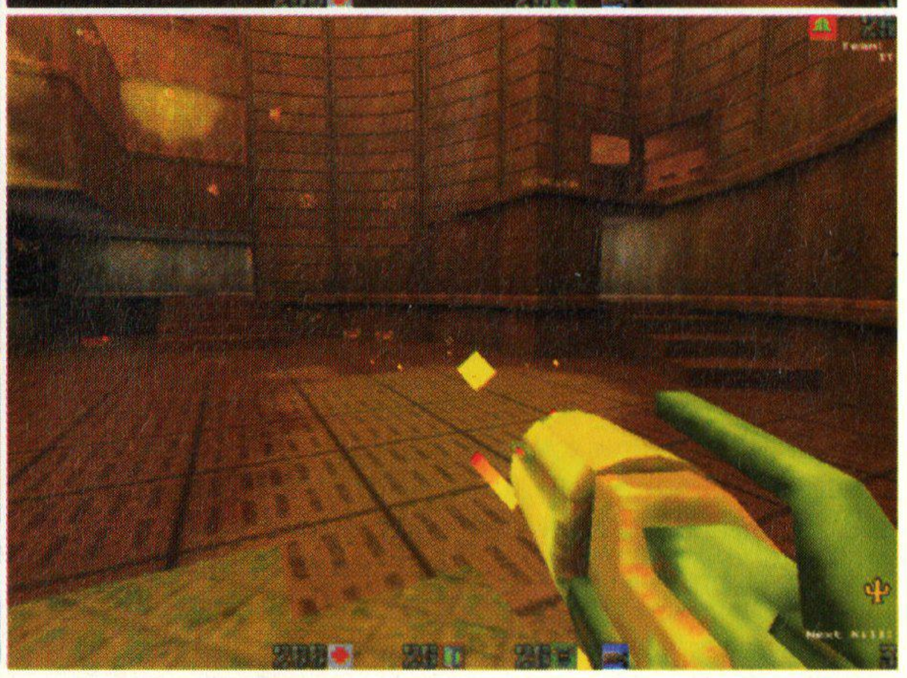












TAKING CONTROL

It's strange to think how old *Quake II* is now. Only a couple of months ago it was the game that occupied the office network almost every lunch-time, but *Half-life* has been merciless in its crushing of id's classic. Being obviously rusty after a few months neglect it took a while to get back into the swing of things, but as soon as I did the good old memories came flooding back.

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	PC
PUBLISHER	Activision
DEVELOPER	id Software
STYLE	First-Person Shooter
RELEASE	Out Now
PRICE	£24.99
PLAYERS	2-32
PROCESSOR	P90 P150
MEMORY	16MB 32MB
DISK SPACE	45MB
3D ACCELERATOR	Optional

Quake II has now passed its first birthday, but it goes without saying that it has had one of the most prosperous lives of all PC titles. It almost managed to last for the full year as the number one multiplayer title to own, but *Half-Life* has stolen its glory in recent months. *Quake II* and its many mission packs have been confined to the Total Control cupboard gathering dust recently, but the arrival of the third add-on pack, *Extremities,* has been a new breath of life for the old multiplayer king.

Friendly fire

Extremities is not a mission pack – there are no new single player maps and no attempts to improve any aspect of the single player game. It is, as the title states, a Netpack, aimed solely at those of you with Internet or network capacity on your PC. Essentially it is a collection of various mods – add-ons to the game that allow you to play it in a slightly different way. There are ten in total, and all work with varying degrees of success. There are also 23 new deathmatch maps for the normal multiplayer game, a patch to upgrade your game to version 3.20, and a number of extra player skins and models. Everything on the CD has been created by *Quake II* fans from around the world (apart from the patch and a small number of the new levels), and all of them have been available on the Internet for some time, so those of you who have searched the Net for amateur expansions are likely to already have some of the items on the CD.

The excellent quality of the programming on show is an example of the impact that *Quake II* has had on the gaming industry. Some of the amateur programming in the compilation is both excellent and innovative with some hugely original ideas being used. Mods are what the Netpack is really all about – there are ten in total, but variation has



Each new mod has its own selection of maps that have been specifically designed for the game. There are 92 in total, and all are superb

obviously been one of id's priorities when putting the pack together. Without enough space to go into any detail on the new games, these are the pick of the pack.

Super mods

Perhaps the most well-known mod of them all would be capture the flag. This, the most popular *Quake II* Internet game, involves two teams battling to storm the enemy's base and retrieve the opponent's flag. A huge number of points are scored when both flags are in your own base, but unless yours is there as well you'll be a sitting duck until another in your team brings it back. Capture the flag is the most instantly engaging mod to play. As with all of the games here, it works much better over a network because of the lack of any lag time.

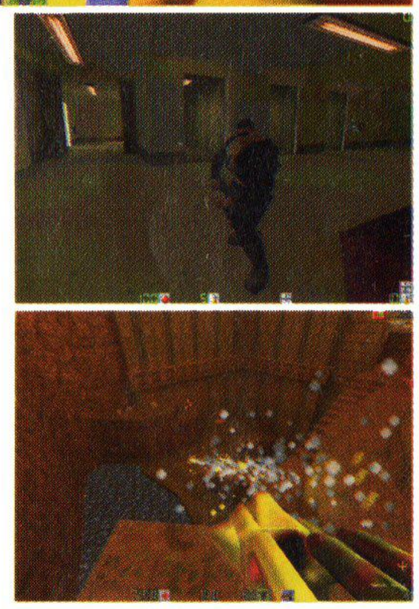
THE EXCELLENT QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMMING ON SHOW IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE IMPACT THAT QUAKE II HAS HAD ON THE GAMING INDUSTRY

Jailbreak is another very good idea – another team game, but this time after each death you are respawned into the enemy jail where you must wait for your team-mates to free you. Should one team capture all the players, they are rewarded with a huge number of points, whilst the captured team are all respawned around the level again.

Kick is the most bizarre mod in the pack. Set in a huge stadium, you spawn in your team's locker room and move out onto a pitch with two goals on either side. On the pitch there is a ball which you must kick (by running towards it) into the opposing goal, scoring points for each goal. It's much more difficult than it sounds, though, especially when considering the amount of ammunition in each locker room.

Of the rest, Red Rover, a slightly more violent version of British Bulldog (this time you are usually hit in the head with a rocket, rather than only being pulled over by the school bully), QWar2 (see box out above), and The C.H.A.O.S. Deathmatch, which features a multitude of new weapons – most of which are superb – are also very entertaining.

Essentially, though, this is basically *Quake II* – the general feeling in the office is that it is time to move on. *Half-Life*'s multiplayer mode is far superior to *Quake II* in almost every way, and *Extremities* has arrived just a few months too late. If, however, you are one of a select few people who would choose to play *Quake II* over *Half-Life*, then this would be a very good buy – that is as long as you do not yet already own the majority of the mods. What most of us are really waiting for is the *Half-Life Team Fortress* mod, coming soon from Valve. **Will**



New power-ups include the triple shot, shown above

OTHER FORMATS?

PlayStation ○○○○○

Since the PlayStation has no Internet connection and no version of the game, the odds are stacked against a conversion, but *Quake II* will be released on the format this spring.

N64 ○○○○○

As with the PlayStation, there's no chance for a conversion, but you will be seeing *Quake II* with its own four-player split screen option this spring.

Dreamcast ○○○○○

Dreamcast owners shouldn't be worrying about *Quake II*. *Quake III* will be released on the PC in the next few months, and we wouldn't be surprised to see that making an appearance on the Dreamcast in the future.

QUAKE STRATEGIES

QWar 2 is by far the most original idea in the pack. The player has no physical form, instead you have complete freedom to move around the level, as if it was full of water, through walls and even outside the level completely. From your base you can create a number of monsters, and then by clicking on them, then the position that you want them to travel to, you can move your army around the map, collecting cells to generate more creatures and eventually destroy the enemy. It's an intriguing first-person real-time strategy, and by far the best mod to play with only two players.

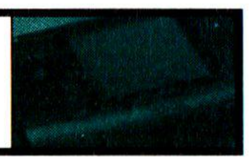


VERDICT

GAME NAME	Quake II: Extremities
GRAPHICS	63
SOUND	82
PLAYABILITY	89
OVERALL Out of 100	73

QUANTITY CONTROL

KING OF FIGHTERS R1



Platform: **NeoGeo Pocket** Publisher: **SNK** Developer: **In-House**
Style: **Beat-'em-up** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-2** Link Cable: **Optional**

One of the five launch titles for SNK's new NeoGeo Pocket game machine, *King of Fighters Round 1* is derived from the *King of Fighters* games on NeoGeo's big arcade cabinet machines. It features a cast of twelve characters in four teams, each one with a range of special moves, both offensive and defensive. For such a tiny machine, the range of attacks is pretty amazing. Watching the tiny but beautifully animated characters leaping about on the machine's five centimetre screen, you can't help but be impressed by the programming. The only problem is that, due to the size of the figures on the screen and the speed of the action, it can get a bit confusing at times especially if both sides are using the same character.

The game has four competition modes, two of which are only accessible with the link cable. On a single machine, you can play one-on-one fights against the CPU using any character, or a team battle mode in which you pick three fighters. Both of these modes are duplicated for link cable battles against another player, connecting two machines together for two-player action. Using just two buttons and the eight-way D-pad, King of Fighters manages to cram in almost as much action as beat-'em-ups running on full sized console machines.

For a pocket console program, this is a surprisingly complete little fighting game, which will provide hours of entertainment for one or two people.

Cliff VERDICT: **82%**



POCKET TENNIS

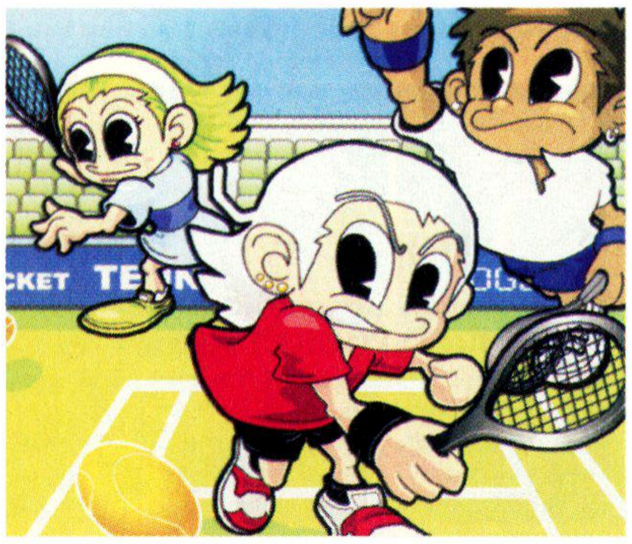
Platform: **NeoGeo Pocket** Publisher: **SNK** Developer: **Yumekobo**
Style: **Sport Sim** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-2** Link Cable: **Optional**

Tennis games have come a long way since Atari launched the first home games console back in 1974. If you could hop in a time machine and nip back twenty-five years, you would find me round at my mate Dave's house playing *Pong* on a black and white telly. If you'd shown that eleven-year-old me *Pocket Tennis* running on the 16-bit NeoGeo Pocket, I would never have believed it.

Pocket Tennis is a fairly straightforward game, with simple controls. You have a choice of eight characters and four courts. You just pick your favourite player for their combination of three attributes, decide whether you want to play a single game or a tournament, then you're away. Button A is a hard shot, button B is a soft shot, and you run around the court with the joystick. Nothing could be simpler. The graphics are well drawn and animated, and move around smoothly and quickly. The backgrounds are simple, of course, but pretty damn good for a hand-held.

The computer opponent is good but not infallible, and with practice you can get a very enjoyable game out of it. It isn't as involving as *King of Fighters R1*, but for easy playability it is hard to beat.

Cliff VERDICT: **77%**



DEVIL DICE



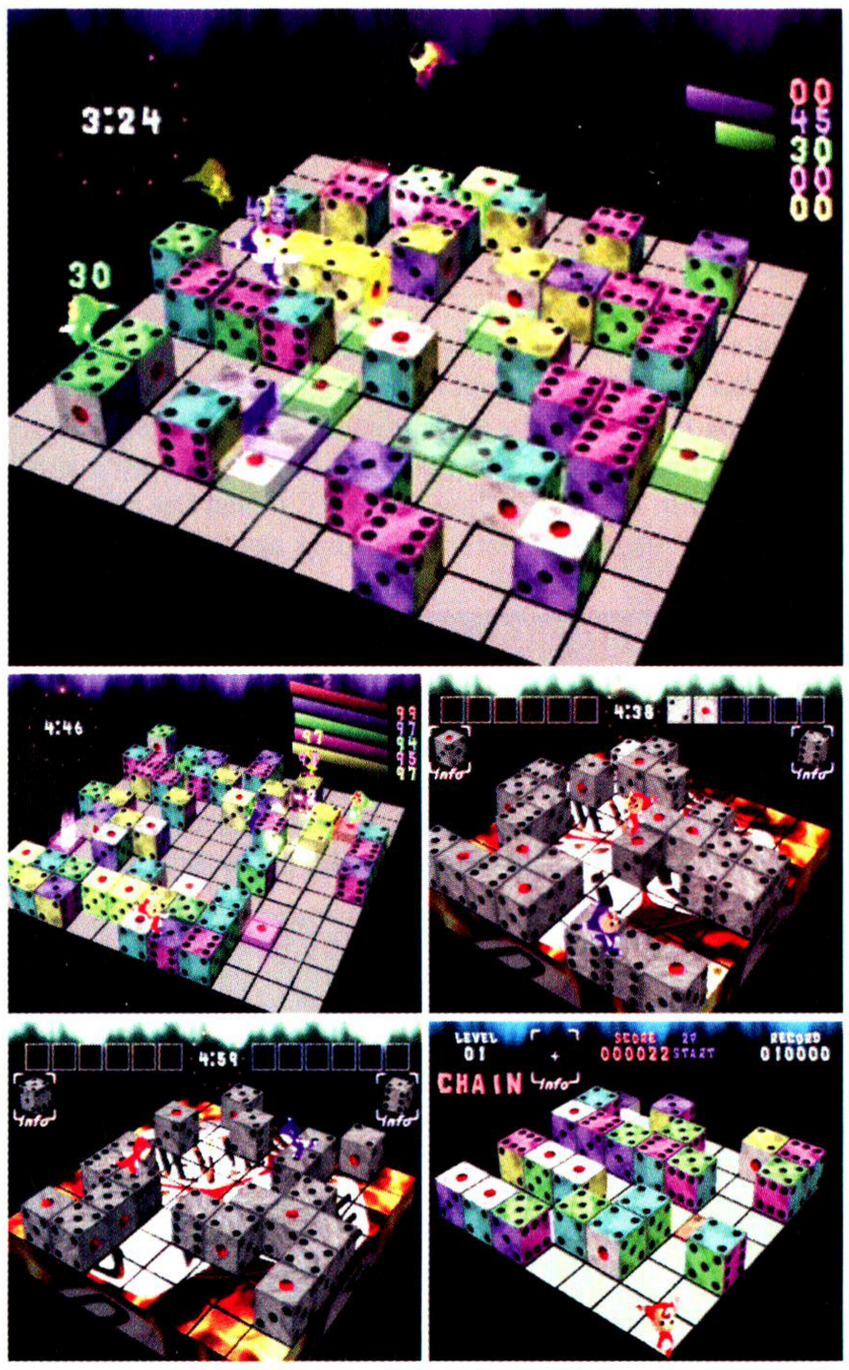
Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Sony** Developer: **Shift**
Style: **Puzzle** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-5**
Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **No** Memory Card: **One Block**

Devil Dice is a great, if slightly confusing puzzle game. The game is played by controlling the character situated on top of the dice. From there you can jump to an adjacent dice, if there is one available, or move by turning the dice over in one of four directions, thus showing a new face. Progress to the next level is achieved not only by turning over all the dice to a particular face, but also by lining them all up so that they are all joined together.

The game works really well, it's easy to get into and very difficult to put down, and the lack of any time limit means that you never feel too rushed, but each level allows you only a limited number of steps, so you can only flip each dice so many times. The down side of this is that many of the levels can be easily solved by trial and error – there are only so many combinations that you can try. There are a variety of other game modes, including a five-player battle arena where players attempt to score as many points as possible from a random generation of dice.

Devil Dice is a great little puzzler. It's not a particularly stunning title, but like its competition, you'll find yourself returning to it again and again.

Will VERDICT: **78%**



VIPER RACING

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Sierra Sports** Developer: **Monster Games Inc.**
Style: **Racing Sim** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£39.99** Players: **1-8**
Processor: P133 **P200** Memory: **32MB** Disk Space: **55MB** 3D Accelerator: **Optional**

Racing Simulations traditionally model themselves around Formula 1. *Viper Racing* is one of a select few titles to realistically model the sports car, and the idea has been pulled off very well. There are a number of realism options that hugely affect the game, the arcade mode is easy to get into, while the full blown simulation looks very detailed and accurate.

Each player begins a career and can race in one of four leagues for as many seasons as it takes to finish first. Each position has its associated cash reward, so eventually you can upgrade the car, making it easier to progress to the next league.

Graphically it's fair to average, but there are some very nice effects on the cars – the damage modelling is especially impressive. *Viper Racing* works very well as both a detailed simulation and a more simple arcade racer, but at the same time it does not excel as either. Overall it's a good title that will keep the majority of racing fans reasonably happy.

Will VERDICT: **71%**



HARVEST MOON

Platform: **Gameboy** Publisher: **THE Games** Developer: **Victor Interactive Software Inc.**
Style: **Farm Sim** Release: **Out Now** Price: **19.99** Game Boy Colour: **Optional**

Most simulations model themselves around an interesting idea (see *Theme Hospital* etc.). *Harvest Moon*, on the other hand, is an attempt to simulate the life of a farmer. It may not be every man's dream, but at least this way it involves a lot less work than the real thing.

To begin with you must set about clearing the debris from your farm using a variety of tools and then plan your patches and sow your seeds. If you keep them all well watered they will eventually be ripe for the picking and can be sold at the market. A successful farmer will ultimately have a farm full not only of crops, but cows, chickens, sprinkler systems and the like.

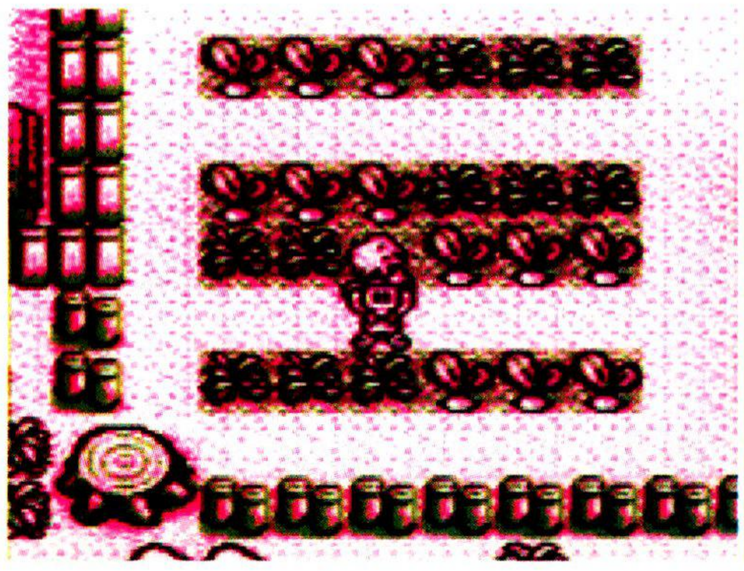
The most impressive feature is that everything has been crammed into the Game Boy cartridge, and there is a lot here, but because of its size only one game can be saved at a time. However, the gameplay quickly becomes repetitive, and you find that each day you must do exactly the same thing as before – watering the plants, laying out the food for your chickens etc. It's hard to think that there will be anyone who will not get bored of the tedious routines in less than a week. It's still a game that you'll come back too frequently, though, and if you're looking for something a little bit different on your Game Boy, I doubt you'll find anything to match this.

Will VERDICT: **70%**









GRANSTREAM SAGA

Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Shade** Developer: **Arc Games** Style: **RPG**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **£39.99** Players: **One**
Analogue: **Yes** Dual Shock: **Yes** Memory Card: **One Block**

With regard to the current plethora of RPGs for the PlayStation, it is becoming harder and harder for developers to provide us with things we haven't already seen in other games. Unfortunately the same goes for *The Granstream Saga*. However, for true RPG fans, this game does distance itself somewhat from the rest of the crud by using an involving plot and varying characters – it has additional little things like drunken men hobbling around the towns at night who speak utter jibberish.

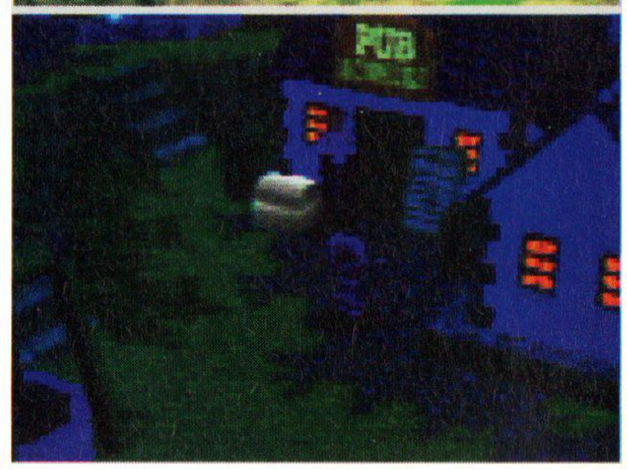
The gameplay is another salvation for the game – the fights are well and truly sprung in your face and, unlike most RPGs, you get to walk around *Virtua Fighter*-style and brawl, not, as is the case with many other similar games, stand around and trade consecutive blows with the enemy. If they had worked on the graphics enough to complement the gameplay and the story then this would be a hit beyond compare. Despite the in-game graphics, the cut scenes are good manga-based affairs, and the fight scenes show that somewhere in the game, someone spent some time modelling the characters.

This game could've been better. Either way, if you're someone who cares not for the graphics but more the story, this is your game.

Wayne VERDICT: **72%**







BASEBALL STARS

Platform: **NeoGeo Pocket** Publisher: **SNK** Developer: **In-House**
Style: **Football Sim** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-2** Link Cable: **Optional**

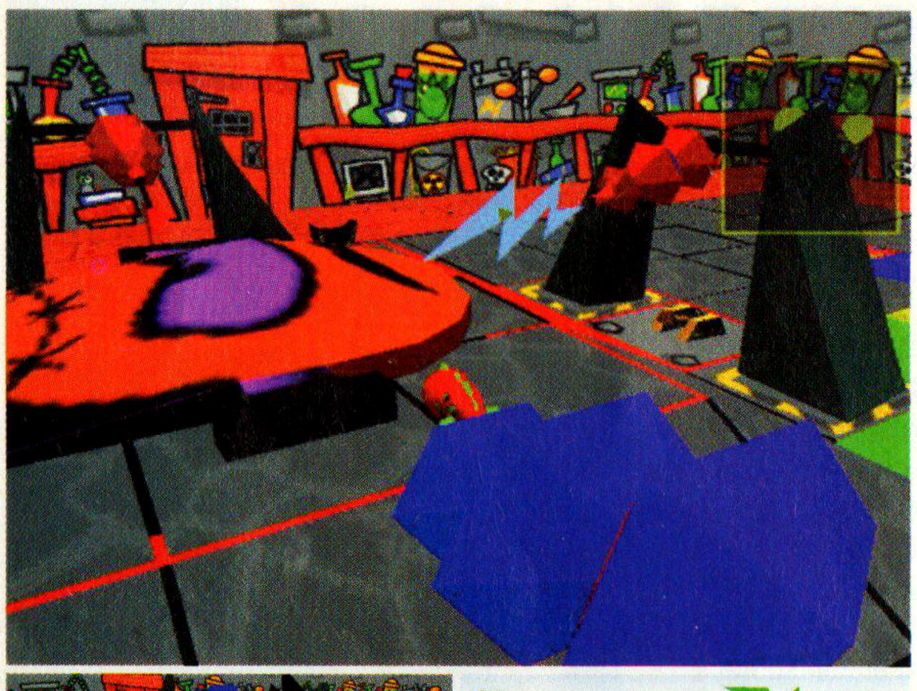
Like most people on this side of the Atlantic, I know almost nothing about the finer points of Baseball, but I understand that it's quite popular in some countries. My lack of knowledge is a bit of a disadvantage when it comes to this launch title for the NeoGeo Pocket, but not so much as to spoil the fun. This is a complex little game which involves the player at all levels, from team selection right through to actual play on the pitch (or 'field' as I believe it's known).

Of the four launch titles which we have in for review, this one has the most depth. There are twelve teams to choose from, and two different stadiums, but you can also use an edit function to build your own team from all the available players.

On the pitch – sorry, field, you control batting, running, pitching and fielding at the appropriate times. The graphics of the game are, like the other NeoGeo Pocket games, surprisingly good. All the teams have certain strengths and weaknesses, and it is up to you to take advantage of these. The game gives you sufficient control that it becomes quite strategic after a while. For a tiny little cartridge in such a small machine, this has a lot of gameplay for your money. Even if you know nothing about baseball apart from how to spell it, you can get a lot out of *Baseball Stars*. **Cliff**

VERDICT: **81%**

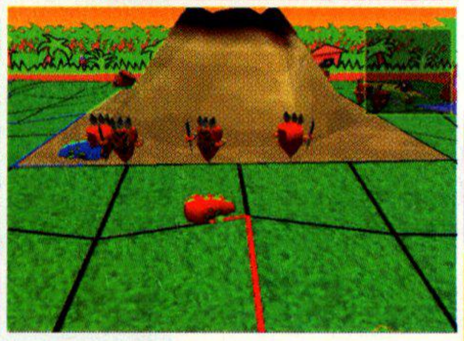


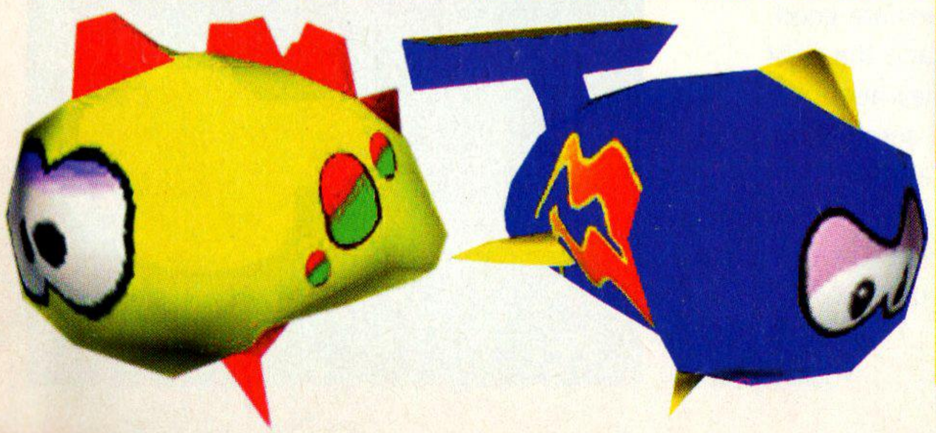












LIVE WIRE!

Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **SCi Entertainment** Developer: **In-House** Style: **3D Puzzle**
Release: **March** Price: **£34.99** Players: **1-4** Analogue: **Yes** Dual Shock: **Yes** Memory Card: **One Block**

One of the oldest genres of computer games is the abstract puzzle. Such games as *Tetris* and *Sentinel* have become classics, and the genre continues with titles like *Wetrix* appearing late last year. SCi Entertainment, best known for the brilliant multi-platform hit *Carmageddon*, have entered the puzzle market with a snappy little game called *Live Wire!* which is being released on the PlayStation, PC and Colour Gameboy next month.

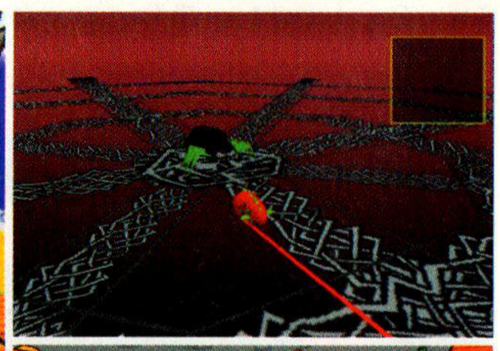
As with most puzzle games, the basic concept is very simple, although the strategies involved can be enormously complex. You are in control of a small, colourful little bug who zips around on the lines of a square grid, leaving a coloured trail behind him (her? it?) If you draw a line around a square, it flips over and turns into your colour. The object is to have more squares of your colour at the end of the game. There are three other little bugs, you see, and they are trying to turn the grid their colour. They can be computer players or human controlled, but you still have to beat them.

There are fifty levels in the game, split into five different themes. Some are truly bizarre, including a game of Space Invaders and a nausea-inducing fairground Pirate Ship ride. *Live Wire!* is bright, fast and colourful, and is highly entertaining. It will obviously appeal mostly to younger players, but is highly recommended nonetheless.

Cliff

VERDICT: **78%**



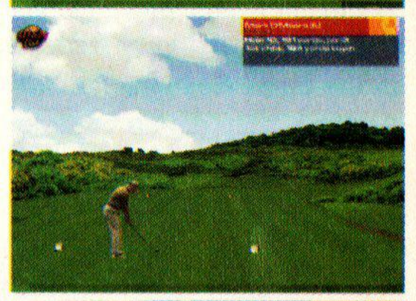




PRO 18 WORLD TOUR GOLF

Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Psygnosis** Developer: **Intelligent Games Ltd.** Style: **Golf Sim** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-4**
Processor: **P200 P266** Memory: **16MB 32MB** Disk Space: **500MB** 3D Accelerator: **Not Supported**



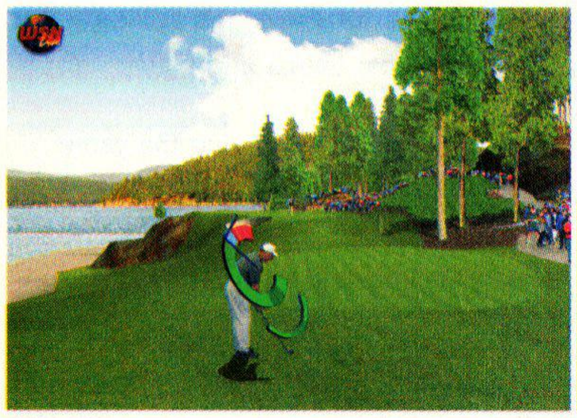


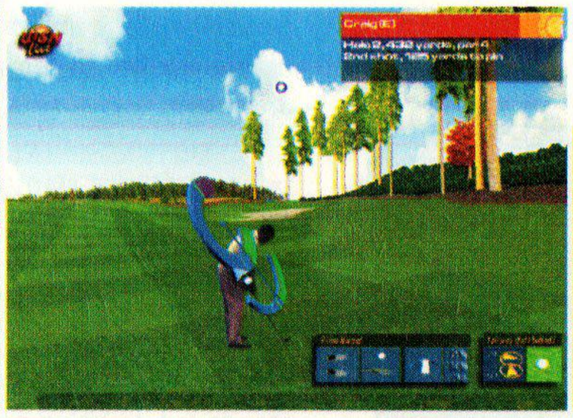
Boring, boring, boring. Sorry Psygnosis, but that, by definition, is the verdict of every golf game ever made. Once you've played the real thing then there is no video game that can hope to simulate the real experience of golf.

It doesn't help that almost every golf game since *Leaderboard* has had the same control method; one click to start the swing, one click to set the power, and one click to swing and set the fade and draw. *Pro 18 World Tour Golf* goes one step further, and on the third click you have to hold the button and release to set the amount of fade/draw.

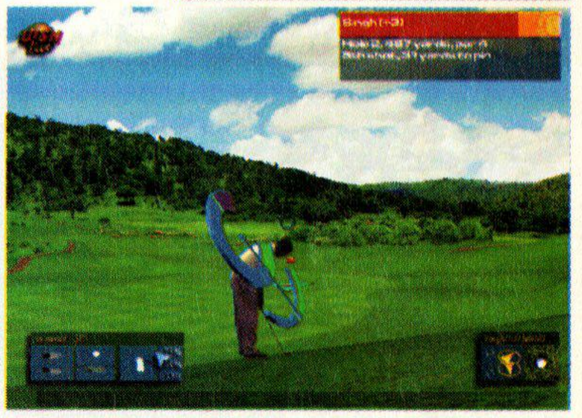
Apart from this, *Pro 18 World Tour Golf* is a below average golf game with poor 3D courses (there are only three) and a few pro golfers to play with or against. The control interface is badly designed and unnecessarily time-consuming. Overall the game is an unfulfilling experience – it's not even the same league as *Tiger Woods '99*. Even if you are a huge fan of golf on the PC, it's best to stick with EA's game.

Nick VERDICT: **35%**









ELIMINATOR

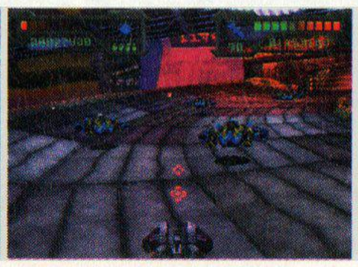
Platform: **PC** Publisher: **Psygnosis** Developer: **Magenta Software**
Style: **Arcade Action** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£34.99** Players: **One**
Processor: **P166** Memory: **32MB 64MB** Disk Space: **20MB** 3D Accelerator: **Optional**

This game has been kicking around for a while, but is finally due for release this month. It has been touted as being a PC game similar to the PlayStation classic *WipEout*, also published by Psygnosis. This may make people want to buy the game, but I'm afraid the description is misleading. The only similarity to *WipEout* is the shape of the hover vehicle you pilot. In terms of gameplay it has far more in common with the early PlayStation title *Tunnel B-1*. You drive your tank around, and a variety of bizarrely shaped enemies do their best to stomp, blast and crush you into oblivion. The enemies have no AI to speak of, they just move in and attack.

The courses consists of a series of connected arenas, and once you clear one area of foes, it opens a gate into the next bit, where you have to do it all over again. The graphics are disappointing and unimaginative, and like the rest of the game, a bit crap. There is no real racing involved, and the rather tiresome method of controlling your vehicle makes the gameplay slow and cumbersome rather than fast and furious. The main gun of your tank has to be elevated or depressed to hit many of the enemies, which involves slow and careful aiming rather than the high speed dog-fighting which makes *WipEout* such a white-knuckle ride. In *Eliminator*, if you charge around at full speed you just miss everything, which is precisely what you should do with this game.

Cliff VERDICT: **42%**







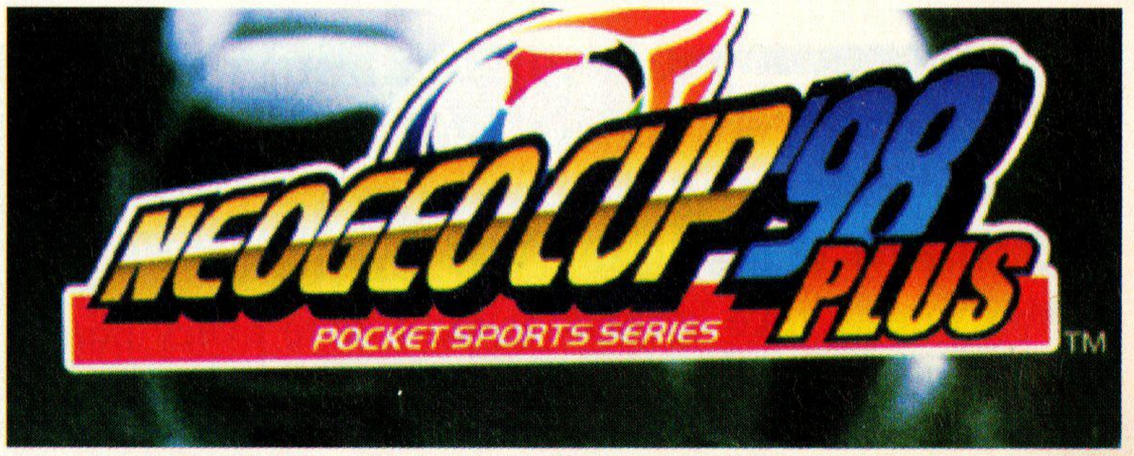
NEOGEO CUP 98 PLUS

Platform: **NeoGeo Pocket** Publisher: **SNK** Developer: **In-House**
Style: **Football Sim** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£29.99** Players: **1-2** Link Cable: **Optional**

Every games platform needs to have a football game, and *Cup 98 Plus* is the NeoGeo Pocket's stab at the genre. This is another in-house project from SNK, and it is unfortunately the weakest of the four launch titles up for review this month. There are a couple of problems with this game, which make it difficult to get much fun out of. Because the screen of the NeoGeo is of course rather small, and the players are relatively large, you have no idea where most of your other players are, which makes it a bit tricky to pass the ball to them. You tend to find yourself running a solo player up the pitch desperately trying to avoid the opposition. Of course the computer controlled players have no such problem, which means they can get the ball down the pitch and into your goal with monotonous regularity.

This brings up another problem, which is goalkeeping. Your goalie grabs the ball, but then immediately drops it, at which point the other team kick it into your net. There also seems to be some confusion over the basic rules of football. Offsides are never called, and the CPU team seem to get away with murder on a regular basis. As football games go, this just isn't cricket.

Cliff VERDICT: **39%**



MORTAL KOMBAT 4

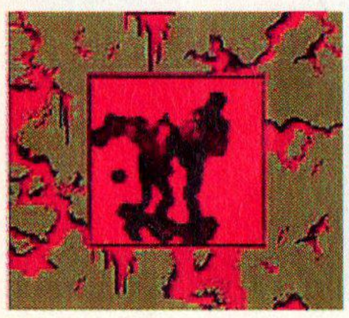
Platform: **Game Boy** Publisher: **Midway** Developer: **Digital Eclipse**
Style: **Beat-'em-up** Release: **Out Now** Price: **19.99** Game Boy Colour: **Optional**

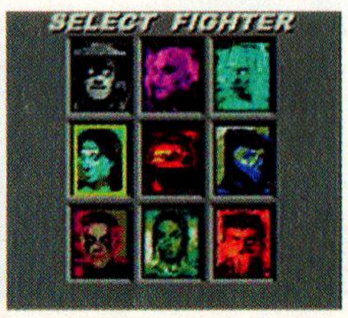
Releasing *Mortal Kombat* on the Game Boy makes a lot more sense than it did on the PC and PlayStation. It's a poorly animated beat-'em-up featuring a number of similar fighters with a very limited number of moves each. For a higher spec machine this would be highly questionable, but on the Game Boy you don't expect to be playing a beat-'em-up capable of rivalling *Tekken 3* or *Virtua Fighter 3tb*.

The game is actually a very good conversion. The majority of the moves remain and the in-game speech is pretty good considering the platform. Each character has his or her own fatality move, which is displayed via an almost illegible video scene. The lack of a two player link-up mode is a big blow, however, as this would have been the game's main selling point. As a single player game the lack of moves and the similarity of your opponents leads to a repetitive game that won't last you long. Using Start as a block move takes a while to get used to also.

There isn't much competition for beat-'em-ups on the Game Boy, and die-hard fans will appreciate this reasonable attempt, but it's ultimately a genre that will always stumble on this platform, and *Mortal Kombat 4* is a perfect example of this.

Will VERDICT: **70%**



RAMPAGE WORLD TOUR

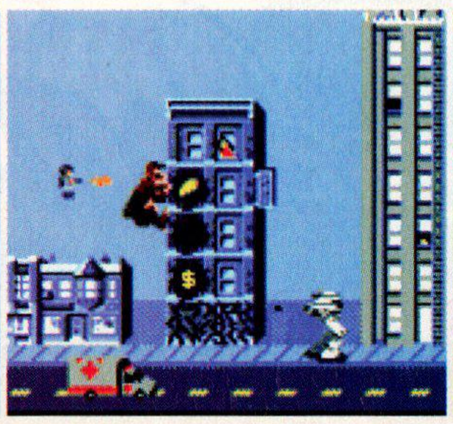
Platform: **Gameboy** Publisher: **Midway** Developer: **Digital Eclipse** Style: **Action**
Release: **Out Now** Price: **19.99** Game Boy Colour: **Optional**

Rampage World Tour is a dire game that could have been so much better. As one of three huge monsters you must attempt to destroy a series of cities from around the world. Why? Nobody knows. Imagine a 2D version of *Godzilla* on the Dreamcast and you'll get the general idea.

There are over a hundred levels full of skyscrapers and other assorted buildings, and you basically climb the sides and punch, kick and jump on the buildings until they are all demolished. Trying to stop you are a number of human-controlled defences, helicopters, tanks etc. which can be destroyed with a bit of effort, but it's absolutely pointless since another will immediately arrive to take its place. Even if you begin the level planning to be careful and cautious, advancing is faster if you ignore them and their bullets completely. Eating civilians either on the ground or out of office windows can restore your energy, so to avoid dying you need only make sure that you are eating enough civilians to balance your energy loss from the oncoming fire. This quickly becomes the format for the entire game. With no variation at all, this will not be a title that you'll be taking out of your cupboard too often.

Will VERDICT: **27%**






NFL XTREME

Platform: **PlayStation** Publisher: **Sony** Developer: **989 Sports**
Style: **American Football Sim** Release: **Out Now** Price: **£39.99**
Players: **1-2** Analogue: **No** Dual Shock: **Yes** Memory Card: **One Block**

It would probably be fair to say that Sony won't be expecting to shift too many copies of *NFL Xtreme* over here. The problem with this and all the other American Football games on the market is that you really need to be a big fan of the game to get the best from it. For those of you like me, with no passion or knowledge of the sport, the gameplay in *NFL Xtreme* comes across as tedious, repetitive and dull.

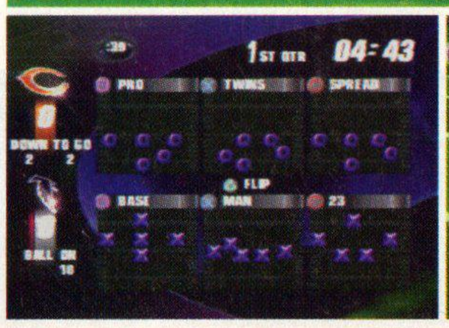
While the game may not have any universal appeal, it's a very good representation of the sport, and fans will be suitably impressed. The main competition comes from EA Sports' *Madden '99* – a fine game in its own right – and the two titles share a lot in common. Sony have also successfully secured an official license to the game so the real teams and player names are intact.

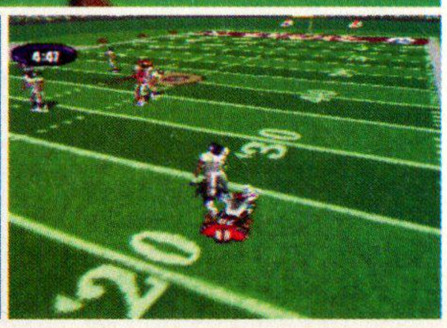
American Football is a pretty physical sport, and the game takes an almost slapstick aproach to its portrayal. Ocassionally smoke trails scar the pitch after a sucessfull run, ala Back to the Future, and so on.

There is no particular aspect of the game that can be faulted. The catches are often hard to pull off and the pitch has no texture. When compared to *Madden '99* there isn't much that stands out as being new or distinctive between the two. Both this and *Madden '99* are high quality simulations of the sport, and packed full of detail. There's very little point in owning both games, but *NFL Xtreme* won't disappoint any hardened fans of the sport.

Will VERDICT: **77%**



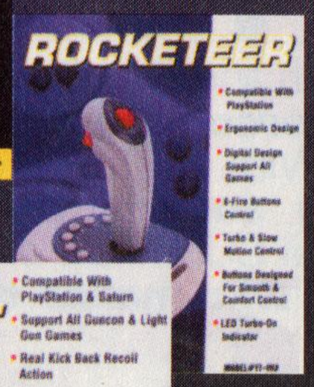




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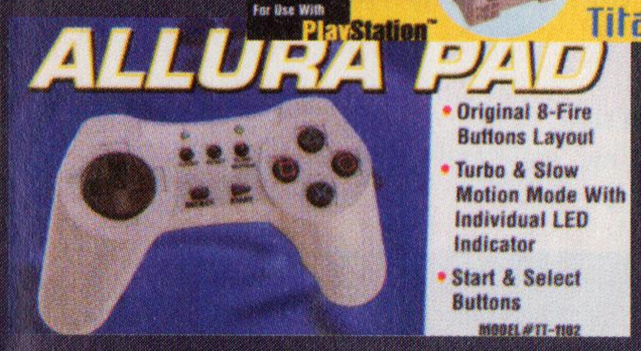
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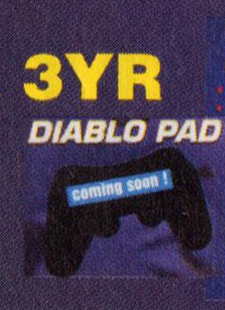














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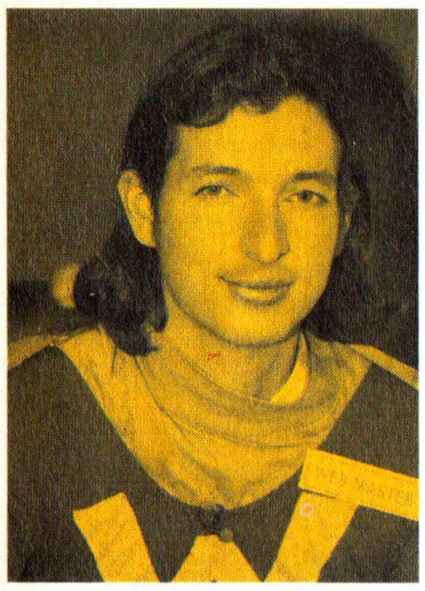
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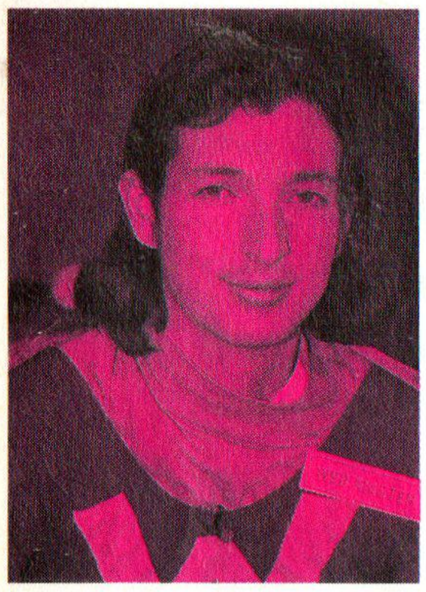
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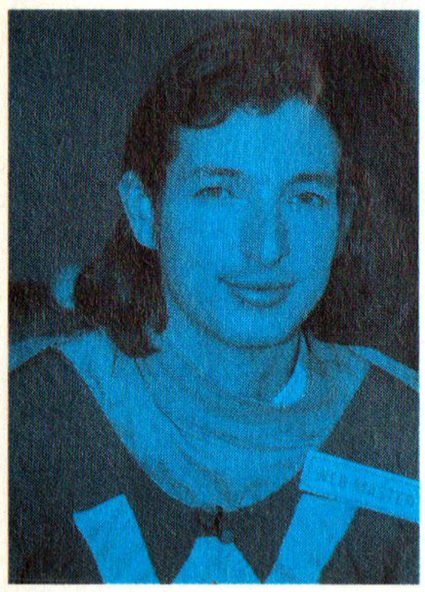
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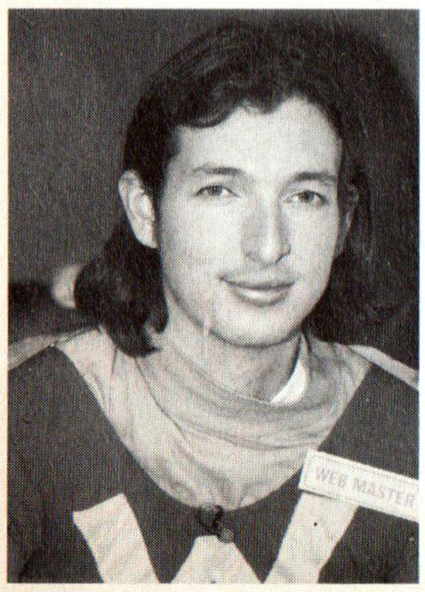
Having words with...

Any of you who **manage to get up in time** to watch the **Big Breakfast** will no doubt be aware of the **industry's biggest personality** – the self-styled **master of the Internet**, The Webmaster. With his trademark **yellow Y-fronts and purple tights**, this man – nay, **superhero** – is a figurehead to Internet users all over the world. Total CONTROL dropped him an e-mail to find out just what makes **the man who makes the 'sign of the Web' want to do such a thing**.









Q: What were you doing before your big break on the Big Breakfast?
A: Before the Big Breakfast I was aimlessly surfing the Web, unsure what to do with my powers of Webmastery.

Q: How did the TV work come about?
A: Basically the TV work came about by a mistake on my part. I was trying to order a take-away on-line and looked up a Big Breakfast. A couple of wrong mouse clicks and I had signed to the Big Breakfast. But now I'm there, I love it, and the food is great.

Q: What do you do when you're not mastering the Web?
A: I tend to relax in my en suite Olympic-sized pool, sipping drinks and listening to laid-back jazz.

Q: What is your opinion of the Internet? Do you think it should remain a free-thinking area or should there be more control?
A: I don't think there should be too much control, but at the end of the day it's up to the ISPs where the buck stops.

Q: What do you think the future of the Internet is?
A: I think the Net will more and more become a means of communication with faster lines and modems – it will become more practical to conduct business over the Net. And for entertainment, the room for expansion is huge, with on-line games getting better all the time.

Q: What on-line games get you going?
A: My own game, 'Chatroom Bulldogs'. The idea of the game is to go into a chatroom and be the last one there. The only rule is no swearing – just be as bizarre as possible and scare everyone out. Top fun, especially in a room full of Americans.

Q: Has anything interesting come up in the live on-line chats that the Big Breakfast hosts from time to time?
A: Find out for yourselves – visit our site and read the transcripts of the chats with Johnny, Denise and Caprice.

Q: Any plans for you own Website?
A: Yes. We are going to change it soon, but to what is top secret.

Q: Okay, Superman's Achilles heel is Kryptonite. Do you have any such weaknesses?
A: Well, I have caught a virus at the moment and keep sneezing. I probably downloaded it.

Q: Are you related to the Gamesmaster by any chance?
A: We share the same surname, but it's very common (like Smith) where I come from.

Q: Does the 'sign of the Web' give you any special powers?
A: Not the sign, but the suit allows me to step in deep puddles while retaining dry feet.

Q: What's next? Channel 4's new games show, or maybe a Hollywood career?
A: I am very happy at the Big Breakfast, so any offers that come in I knock back.

Q: And finally, is that your own suit?
A: That's between the suit and me, and I can tell you we are very close.



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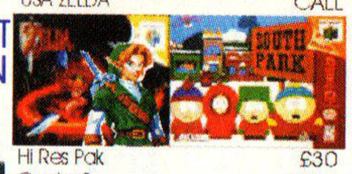


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EASY WAY OUT

You asked us for a cheats section so we've **given you a cheats** section. Sorry **that it's** not 20 pages **long and** full of crap, but **that's just** not us.

NINTENDO 64

GEX 64

If you'd like to be a lizard with 99 lives instead of one life, then try entering the following ridiculously long password: M758FQRW3JF8FQRW4! (including the exclamation mark)
You'll also have a complete collection of remotes as well.

BANJO-KAZOOIE

If you've yet to finish Rare's latest masterpiece, then these codes should help you along. In the Treasure Trove Cove, go to the small sandcastle and type the following codes on the floor:
First type CHEAT and then one of the following:
GIVETHEBEARLOTSOFAIR – Infinite air
BANJOBEGSFORPLENTYOFEGGS – Eggs
AGOLDENGLOWTOPROTECTBANJO – Gold Feathers
MANYGOESWITHLOTSOFBANJOS – Extra lives
DONTBEDUMBOGOSEEMUMBO – Mumbo Tokens
NOWYOUCANFLYHIGHINTHESKY – Red Feathers
ANENERGYBARTOGETYOUFAR – Maximum Health

1080° SNOWBOARDING

Criticised only for its limited life span, here's a number of hidden bonuses you might want to try... First finish Match Race on Expert level and then beat all the EAD scores on the game's Time Attack, Trick Attack and Contest modes. Now pick either Rob Haywood and press right C then A, Akari Hayami followed by left C then A, or Kensuke Kimachi and press the up C button followed by A, to access Panda Man, Ice Man and Gold Ice Man respectively. You know you want to.

If you want to ride the Penguin Board, first perform every trick in the game under the Training mode, then press the bottom C button and the A button when you select any character's default board.

TUROK 2

If Turok has been taking a beating recently, open the cheat menu and enter the following to tip the scales to your side:
AAHGOO – Adds baby faces to the health icons
PIPSQUEAK – Makes all the enemies very small
HOLASTICKBOY – Makes enemies tall and skinny
IGOTABFA – Pen and Ink mode
HEEERESJUAN – Adds Juan's face to health icons
WHATSATEXTUREMAP – Changes your graphics set-up to Gouraud mode texture shading
LIGHTSOUT – Makes everything dark.
UBERNOODLE – Big head mode
STOMPEM – Makes enemy hands and feet bigger
ONLYTHEBEST – Shows the game credits
FROOTSTRIPE – Try it and see
BEWAREOBLIVIONISATHAND – Opens every cheat code

PC CDROM

RAINBOW SIX

During a game press ` and enter one of the following codes:
TEAMGOD – Team god mode
AVATARGOD – Player god mode
STUMPY – Stumpy mode
CLODHOPPER – Big feet and hands
MEGAOGGIN – Mega head mode
BIGNOGGIN – Big head mode
5FINGERDISCOUNT – Restore ammo
NOBRAINER – Turns all enemy AI off
DEBUGKEYS – Debug keys enabled
TURNPUNCHKICK – Change players from 3D to 2D
1-900 – Heavy Breathing
EXPLORE – Victory conditions on/off

CONFLICT FREESPACE: THE GREAT WAR

During the game type ` then hold down ~ while you enter in the following codes. Unfortunately you will be unable to advance past the level you are on if you use any of the cheats.
C – Send message to enemies
Shift + C – Countermeasures for all ships
Shift + K – Destroy targeted sub-system
Alt + K – Receive 10% damage
I – Invulnerability
O – *Descent*-style physics
W – Infinite weapons for your ships
G – Completes all primary goals
Shift + G – Completes all secondary goals
Alt + G – Completes all bonus goals
9 – Scroll forwards through secondary weapons
Shift + 9 – Scroll backwards through secondary weapons
0 (Zero) – Scroll forwards through primary weapons
Shift 0 (Zero) – Scroll backwards through primary weapons
R – Rearm request for target

KLINGON HONOR GUARD

To activate these cheats first press TAB, type the following codes and then hit ENTER:
ALLAMMO – Refill ammunition
GHOST – No clipping (walk through walls)
FLY – Fly mode
WALK – Exit ghost/fly mode
INVISIBLE 1/0 – Invisibility (1 = on, 0 = off)
OPEN XXXX – Level skip (replace XXXX with level name)
GOD – God mode

PLAYSTATION

TENCHU: STEALTH ASSASSINS

Total CONTROL shares the true secrets of the Ninja. Enter the following codes at the right places for some not-so-honourable help.

At the item selection screen, do the following:
Press: ←←↓↓◤◤▲↘ – gives Ayame a new costume
Hold R1 then press: ←←↓↓◤◤▲↘ – All inventory items available
Hold L2 then press: ←←↓↓◤◤▲X – Increases item inventory
At the mission select screen, do the following:
Hold R2 then press: ←←↓↓◤◤▲◤ – Level select
Hold L1 then press: ←←↓↓◤◤▲↘ – Japanese voices after the first level
Hold R1 then press: ←←↓↓◤◤▲ X – Layout select
When the game is paused, do the following:
Press ←←↓↓◤◤▲□ to refill your health
Press and hold L1 and R2 then enter ↑▲↑X↑▲→↘, release L1 and R2 then enter L1, R1, L2, R2. Unpause the game and then hold L2 and R2 to enter the debug menu.

COOL BOARDERS 3

Enter your name as one of the following to help boost your cool:
WONITALL – All courses
OPEN EM – All boarders
BIGHEADS – Big heads (L2 and R2 changes the size)
SHOWPOS – Director's cut mode

COLONY WARS VENGEANCE

Enter these case sensitive codes in the password menu.
Vampire – Invincibility
Tornado – All weapons
Dark Angel – Primary weapons always available
Chimera – Unlimited secondary weapons
Avalanche – Unlimited afterburners
Hydra – Unlimited money
Thunderchild – All ships
Demon – Mission and FMV select
Blizzard – Enable all cheats
Stormlord – Disable all cheats

FUTURE COP LAPD

Here are a few level codes to use on tricky levels:
Level 1 – TAFRGYBLRR
Level 2 – CRGRGYBLRY
Level 3 – FUMRGYBLRL
Level 4 – SICUGYBLLI
Level 5 – TAFUGYBLLR
Level 6 – CRGUGYBLLY
Level 7 – FUMUGYBLLR
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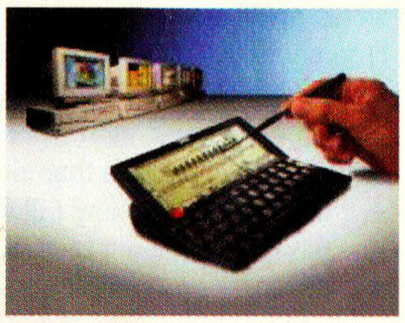
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Hard Stuff

We've been playing with a superb collection of toys this month, and **you can bet** that we'll **be putting up a fight** when we have to return them

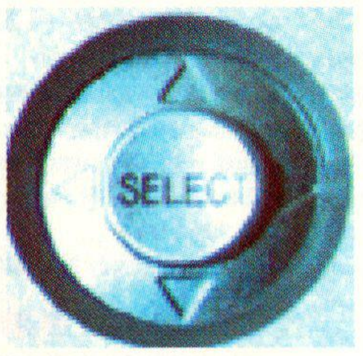
Panasonic DVD – L10

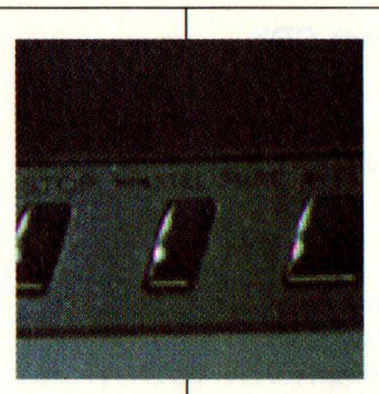
Company: **Panasonic** On Sale: **Out Now**
Price: **£999.95** Format: **DVD** Score: **4/5**

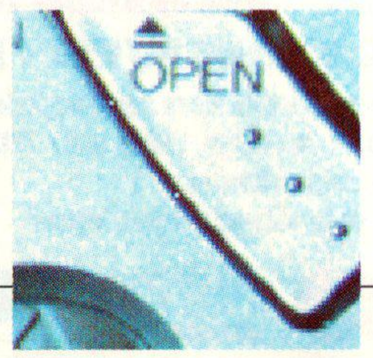
What do you get for the person who has everything? Well, if you've got a thousand pounds to spend, you could go for one of these amazing gadgets. The DVD-L10 is the world's first and smallest portable DVD player. It incorporates a 14.7 cm LCD monitor in 16:9 widescreen format and built-in stereo speakers, and comes with a rechargeable battery pack which gives over two hours of playback time on a full charge. For home use there is an AC adapter and a remote control, and an optical output for connection to an external Dolby 5.1 decoder for home cinema quality sound.

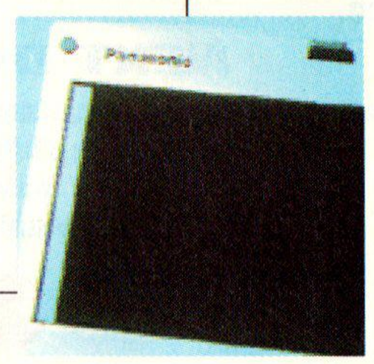
The amount of miniaturised high technology crammed into the 16 x 16 x 4.3 cm case is truly staggering. The device weighs less than one kilogram, yet contains a newly developed brushless motor and optical pick-up superior to many full-sized units.

It has to be said that the small built-in speakers sound rather tinny, and to get the best out of the DVD-L10 a decent pair of headphones would be essential. I'm not sure that you would ever really need a gadget like this – I mean, where would you use it? But when you hold it in your hands you can't help but be impressed by the technological achievement that it represents. The DVD-L10 is unquestionably a rich person's toy, but if I had a grand to blow I'd get one tomorrow.

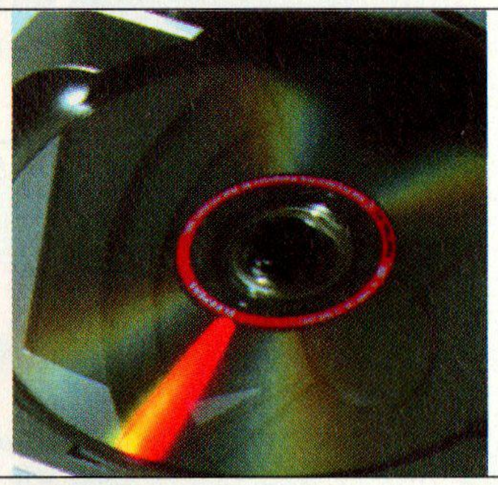


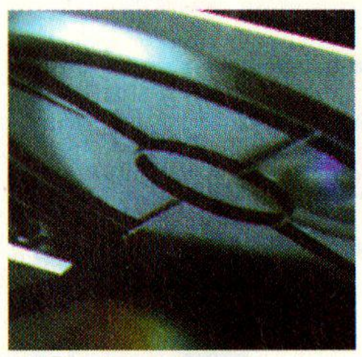


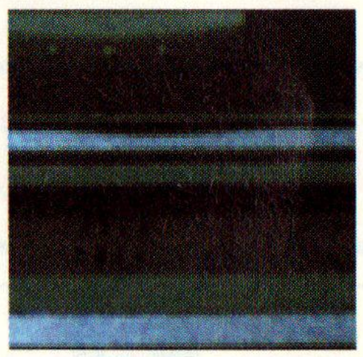


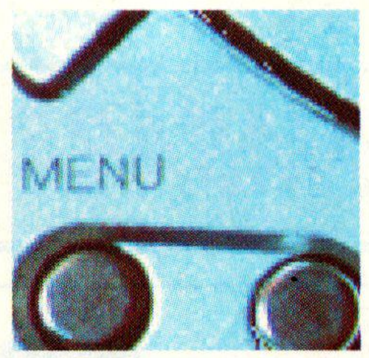






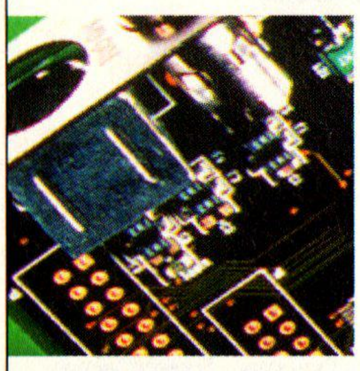


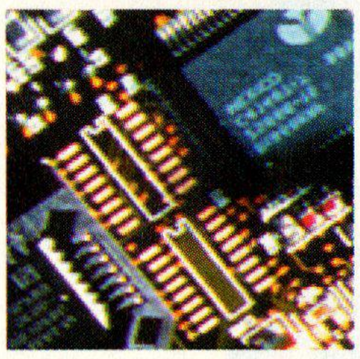


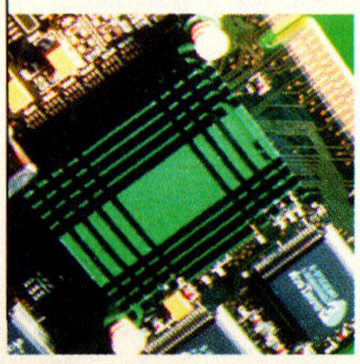


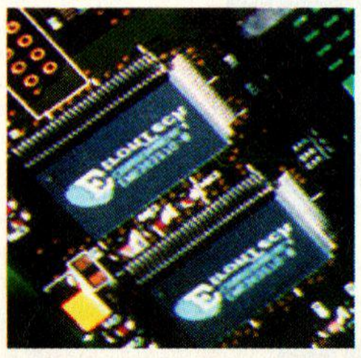
3D Edge Voodoo Banshee Graphics Card

Company: **Pace** On Sale: **Out Now**
Price: **£99.99** Format: **PC** Score: **5/5**





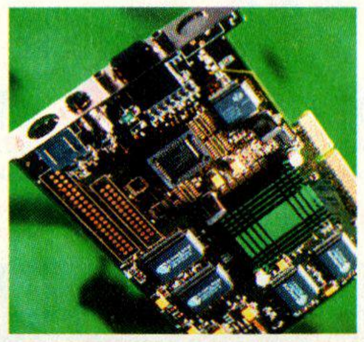




Voodoo Banshee is the latest product from 3Dfx. Incorporating both Voodoo2 3D graphics acceleration and 128-Bit 2D acceleration, it effectively acts as both a standard 2D graphics card and a 16MB Voodoo 2 accelerator combined.

Pace have put together a very easy-to-use card – remove your old cards, insert this, and load up the drivers when prompted. The problems many other cards have been known to cause never arose, and even if they did, the accompanying documentation seems clear enough for a ten-year old to follow. The 3D Edge allows for impressive *Half-Life* resolutions of up to 1024x768 and has a maximum 2D res. of 1600x1200. It also allows you to hook up your PC to any TV with a SCART socket (connectors included) and display or play games through a standard TV, though there were some minor problems with some of the more recent games, (*Half-Life* had to be run using Direct 3D rather than Glide).

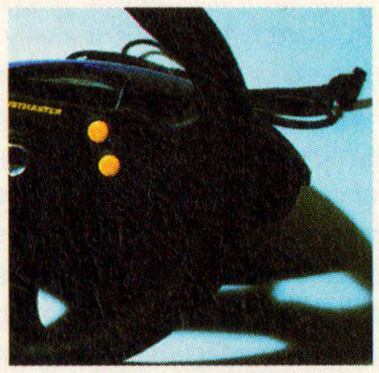
The card comes bundled with the excellent *Wargasm* from Infogrames, and there's also an offer to receive three additional games from a pretty good choice of ten (including *Battlezone, Unreal* and *Forsaken*) for only £13.95.

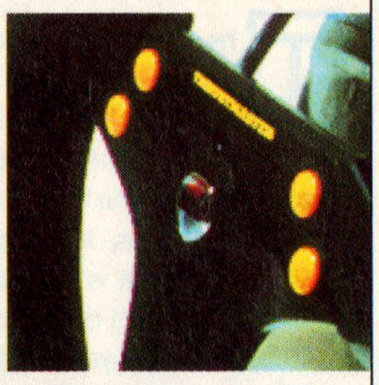


If you already own a 16MB 3D2 card we wouldn't recommend a straight swap (unless you need to clear some space inside your PC), but it's an excellent choice if you are looking to upgrade to a higher spec machine, and at only £99 you can't go far wrong.

The requirements for the Pace 3D Edge are a Win 95 v4.00.212 or later operating system, 16MB (32MB Recommended) of RAM, a Pentium or Pentium II CPU, and a motherboard with an AGP slot.

Formula Super Sport Steering Wheel

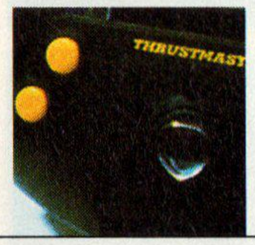


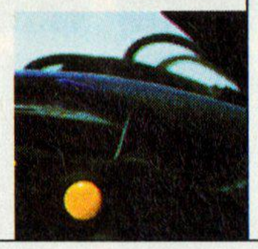


This is without doubt the best value steering wheel controller I have yet seen for the PC. Solidly constructed to Thrustmaster's usual exacting standards, it is a surprisingly small and attractively sleek little unit. The wheel itself is of a comfortable size and rake angle, and is covered with a black non-slip rubberised grip. There are four buttons in the centre area of the wheel, and two paddle switches behind for Formula One-style sequential gear changes. The wheel is not force-feedback, but has strong, smooth springs to give a realistic feel. The controller fixes onto your desk by means of a single large central clamp with a quick release locking action. Once in place it is solid as a rock.





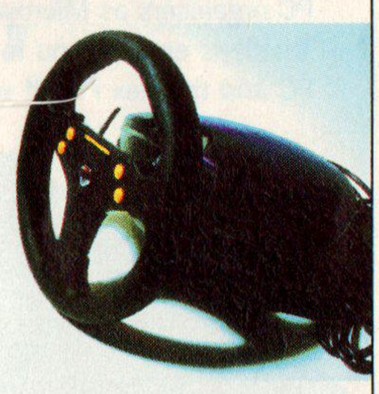




The pedal unit is also one of the best on the market; it is just as well-made as the desk unit, constructed of steel and high impact plastic. It has a wide, flat base which resists slipping, and big pedals. Again, the springs are strong enough to provide feedback even when wearing shoes. The recessed position of the cable means that you can brace the pedal unit against a wall or the back of your desk for even more solidity.

The Formula Super Sport comes with a driver installer disk complete with a patch for Sierra's *NASCAR 2* racing game. All in all, this is a value-for-money package which will be hard to beat.





Company: **Thrustmaster** On Sale: **Out Now**
Price: **£69.95** Format: **PC** Score: **5/5**

Fusion Digital Game Pad

Company: **Thrustmaster** On Sale: **Out Now**
Price: **£24.99** Format: **PC/iMAC** Score: **5/5**



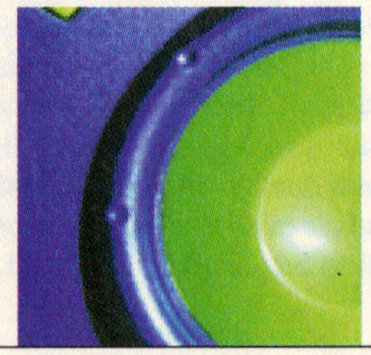


You know, we may have to include a new games platform in Total CONTROL soon. The superb Apple iMac is growing in popularity, and the announcement of the Connectix Virtual Station emulator allowing iMac owners to play over eighty of the latest PlayStation games could see the stylish blue machine becoming the home games PC of the 21st Century.

If it does, then Thrustmaster are going to be well-placed to take advantage of it. Their new Fusion digital USB game pad is fully compatible with the iMac's USB port, as well as PC gameports and USB ports, and comes complete with a dual compatibility disk containing PC and iMac drivers. The disk also contains a demo of *Tomb Raider II* and set-up software to program the pad for a range of games.

The Fusion pad is a development of the company's popular Rage pad. It is more or less the same shape – semi-circular with a domed D-pad – and has the buttons in the same place. The Fusion is slightly smaller than the Rage pad, and is, as you can see, rather more brightly coloured. The blue casing matches the colour scheme of the iMac quite closely. The matt black grips are coated with a rubberised non-slip material, and the pad is surprisingly comfortable in the hands.

Like the Rage before it, the Fusion is a superb all-round gamepad, well-designed and easy to use. With full programmability, multi-platform compatibility and a very reasonable price tag, it is a sure winner.



Company: **Blaze** On Sale: **Out Now** Price: **£6.99**
Format: **Game Boy/Colour Game Boy** Score: **3/5**

Light Magnifier







The Blaze Light Magnifier isn't that bad considering the competition – most magnifiers are about as good as each other, so recommendations usually comes down to the price. The problem with these devices are that they essentially provide an extra reflective surface, so if you're in a well-lit office, for example, bright reflections can be a problem. The peripheral does come with two screen lights to brighten your screen, but a word of warning: the transparent version shines the light in your direction as well, which has obviously not been well thought out. It may also be worth noting that the two shades of purple are completely different to the Game Boy Color, which is a shame.

If you're on the lookout for a light magnifier for your hand-held, then Blaze's offering is a cheap and cheerful option.

Rex Pro Organizer

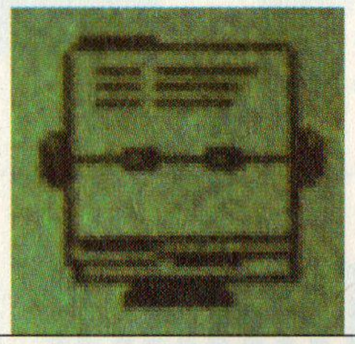
Company: **Franklin** On Sale: **Out Now**
Price: **£155** Format: **PC** Score: **5/5**

The Franklin Rex Pro PC card organiser is a lovely little gadget for those of you who need to have a large amount of business or personal information on hand at all times. It is a tiny device, the size of a credit card and about as thick as a floppy disk, but it can store a vast amount of data in its 512K memory. It is simple to operate via an icon and menu interface. The six button control panel allows you to enter and edit different categories of data, including diary, address book, 'to do' list and memos. It has a world time clock, and an alarm for any calendar event. The 3.5 cm by 5.5 cm LCD screen is very clear and text is perfectly legible.

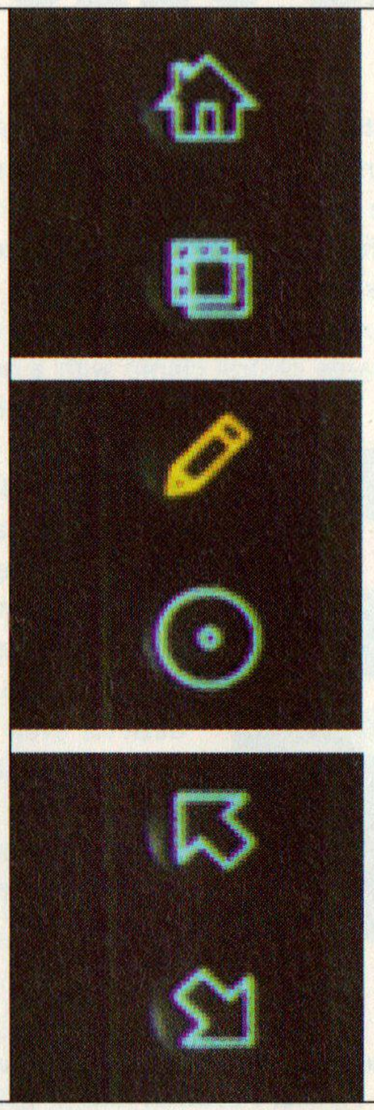
The Rex Pro comes complete with a docking station to plug into your PC and a CD containing TrueSync, a powerful information management program which is fully compatible with such standard PC organisers as Microsoft Outlook 97, Lotus Organiser 97 and Symantec ACT! 3.0, amongst others. TrueSync enables you to transfer information such as calendar entries and address files between your PC and the Rex Pro. If your computer has a PC card slot, as many lap-tops do, the Rex Pro can be connected to that instead. This gadget is not cheap, but it is the smallest and one of the most powerful connectable PDAs, and definitely has 'tech appeal'.

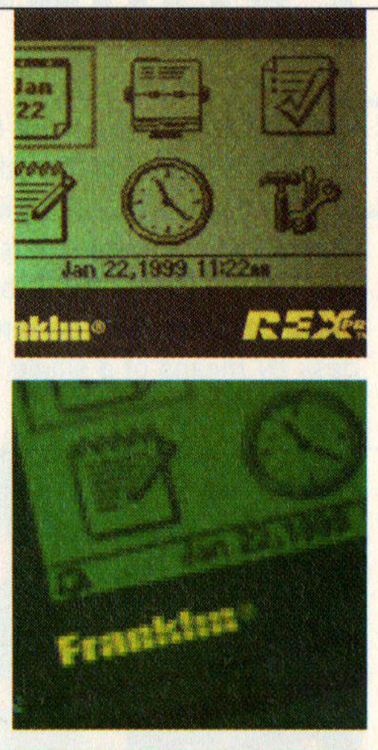
Many thanks to www.21store.com, the on-line technology shop, for supplying this review sample.

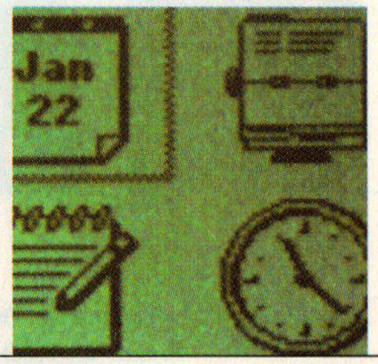












Jordan Grand Prix Racing Wheel II

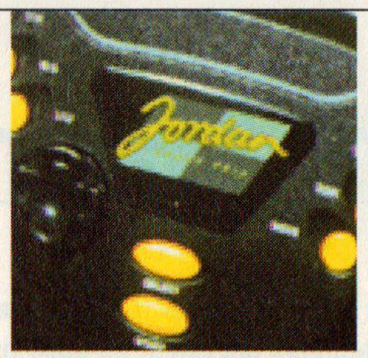
Company: **Joy Tech**
On Sale: **Out Now**
Price: **£59.99**
Format: **PlayStation**
Score: **3/5**

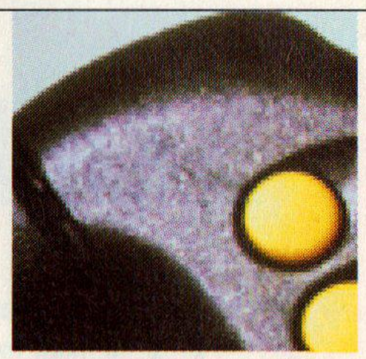
Good steering wheel controllers for the PlayStation are pretty thin on the ground, so a halfway decent one at a fairly reasonable price is better than most of the competition. Joy Tech are the largest manufacturer of games peripherals in Europe, so they must be doing something right. Their kit is usually good value and does the job it was intended for. The Official Jordan Grand Prix Racing Wheel II is their stab at a premium level steering wheel controller, and although it isn't even close to some of the things you can get for the PC, it is certainly ahead of the pack on the PlayStation.

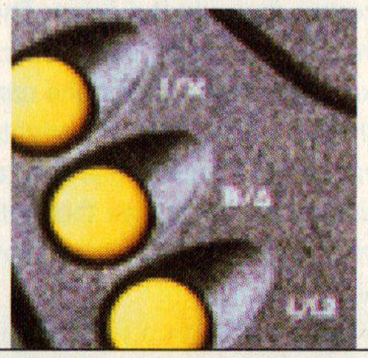
The Jordan II supports four modes – digital and analogue, Dual Shock and Namco NegCon with or without vibration. There is also a function to change the steering sensitivity. The wheel has two vibration motors for a good solid response, but it feels like it might shake itself to pieces if played too hard. The big problem with the Jordan II is build quality. The casing is all plastic, and has a number of sharp edges and loose joins. The pedal unit is very light and skids around on the floor, and the whole thing feels a bit cheap. It works well enough and probably isn't going to fall to bits anytime soon, but I hope Jordan have better controls than this in their F1 cars.

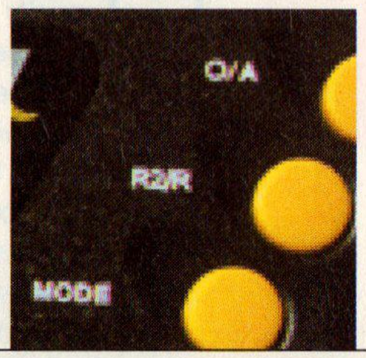












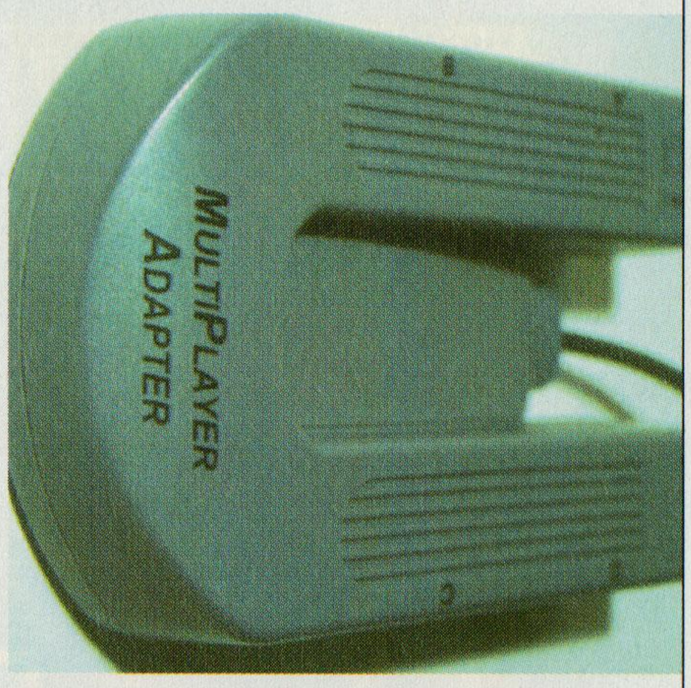


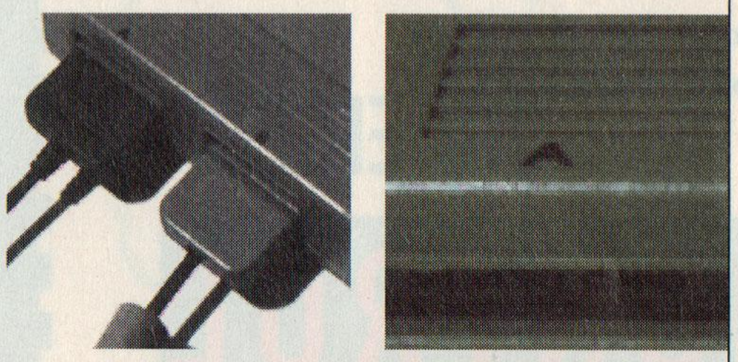
Multiplayer Adapter

Company: **Performance** On Sale: **Out Now**
Price: **£14.99** Format: **PlayStation** Score: **4/5**

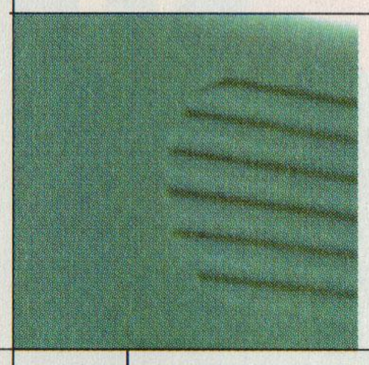
Well, what do I say about this gadget? You plug it in the front of your PlayStation, you plug four controllers into it, you stick in a Multi-tap compatible game (if you have one) such as *Circuit Breakers* or *Micro Machines V3*, and away you go. You can also plug up to four memory cards into it, so it can be useful for doing a bit of file management on your game saves.

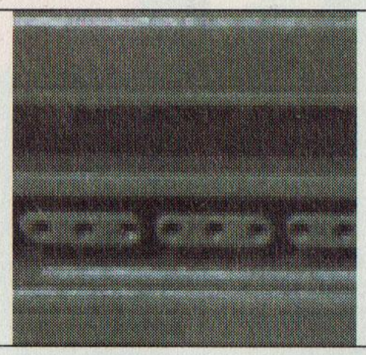
The Performance MultiPlayer Adapter is a solidly put together piece of kit, and is styled and coloured to sort of match the PlayStation. If you are considering buying an official Multi-tap, you could certainly do a lot worse than consider this item as a lower-priced alternative. I really can't think of much else to say about it. The Performance MultiPlayer Adapter: It does exactly what it says on the box.

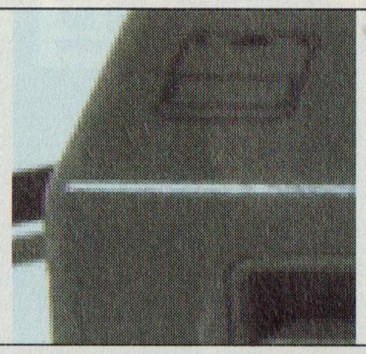


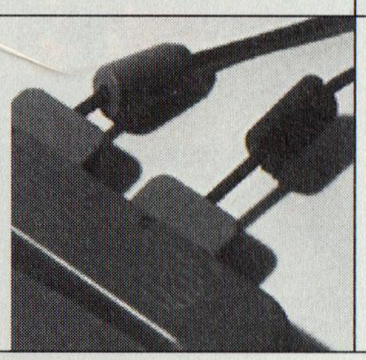






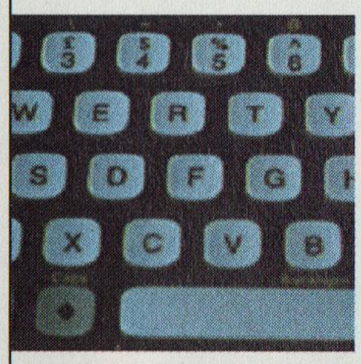




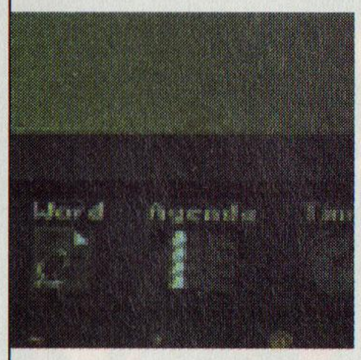


Psion Series 3MX

Company: **Psion** On Sale: **Out Now**
Price: **£239** Format: **N/A** Score: **5/5**

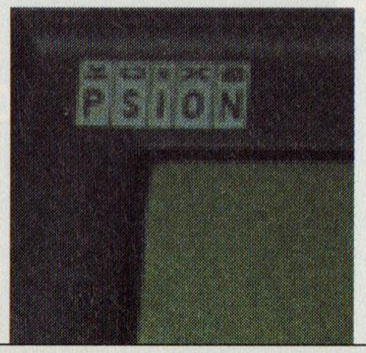








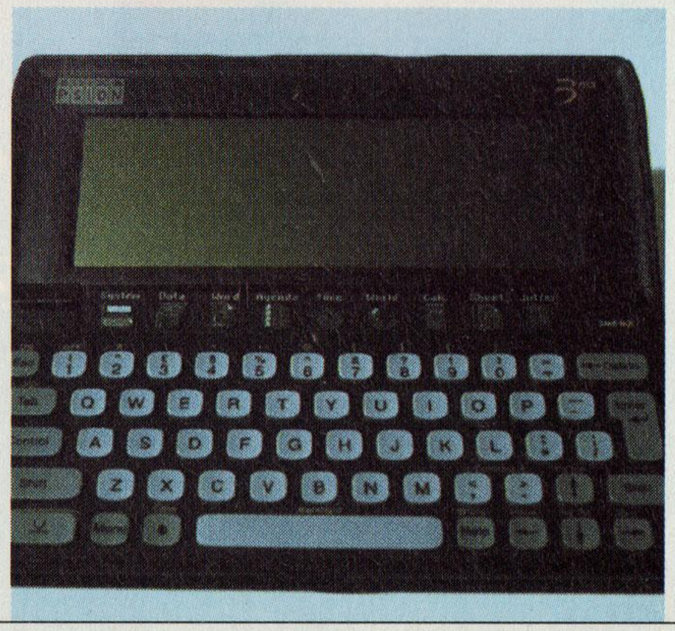


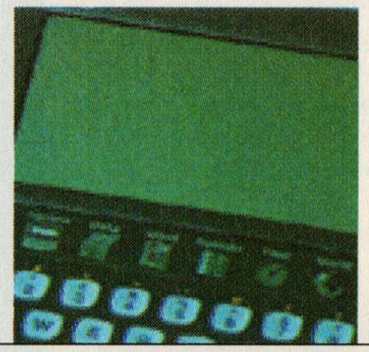


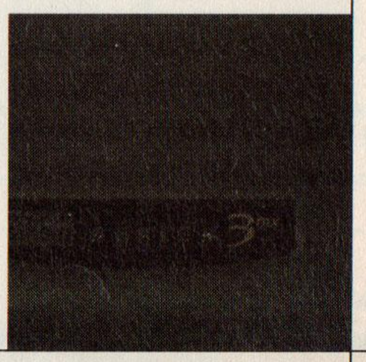
I used to have Psion Series 3 a few years ago, and when it was stolen I felt like I'd lost an arm – these remarkable pocket-sized computers are so useful you soon come to depend on them. The new Series 3mx features a number of improvements over its earlier cousins, the most noticeable being a processor three times faster than the 3c. The difference is immediately apparent, even when doing simple stuff like opening menus. The large high-definition greyscale screen is backlit in a pleasant shade of blue.

The 3mx comes with a suite of very useful programs already installed, including a database file for addresses etc., a fully featured word processor, an agenda and diary manager, a world time finder, a calculator, a spreadsheet, a spelling checker with crossword solving abilities, a Directory Opus-style file manager and a patience game. The 3mx also has a built-in sound sampler for recording voice memos, and the powerful Psion programming language OPL. There is an extensive range of additional software available on plug-in cartridges

The Psion is much more than just another PDA, it really is a pocket-sized computer. The full 'qwerty' keyboard, though small, is quite useable, and with the easy-to-use PsiWin software and link cable, the Psion can chat with your PC and swap files. The two AA batteries will run the machine for over a month of normal use, which makes it more useful on long trips than a laptop. The Psion is a remarkable British invention with a thousand and one uses.

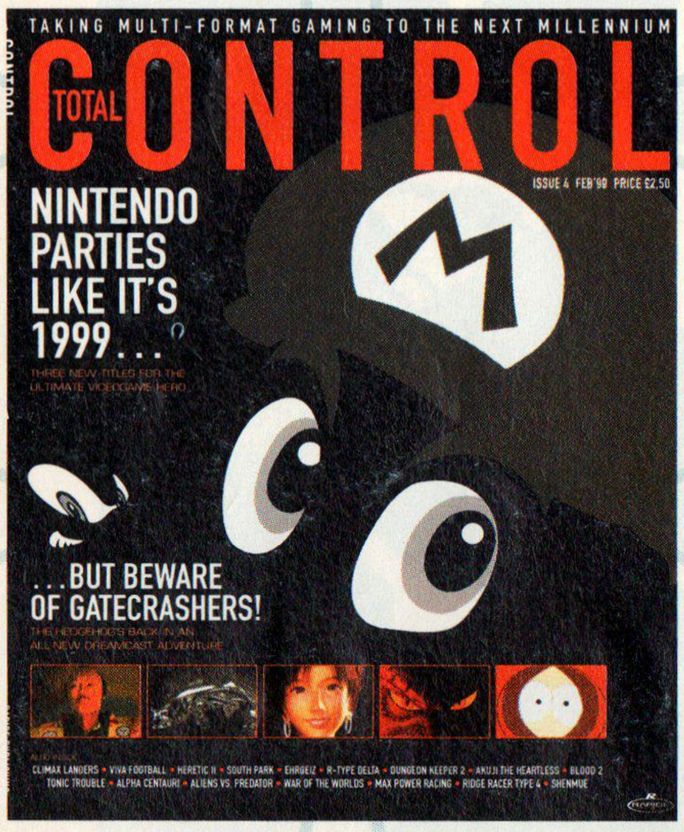






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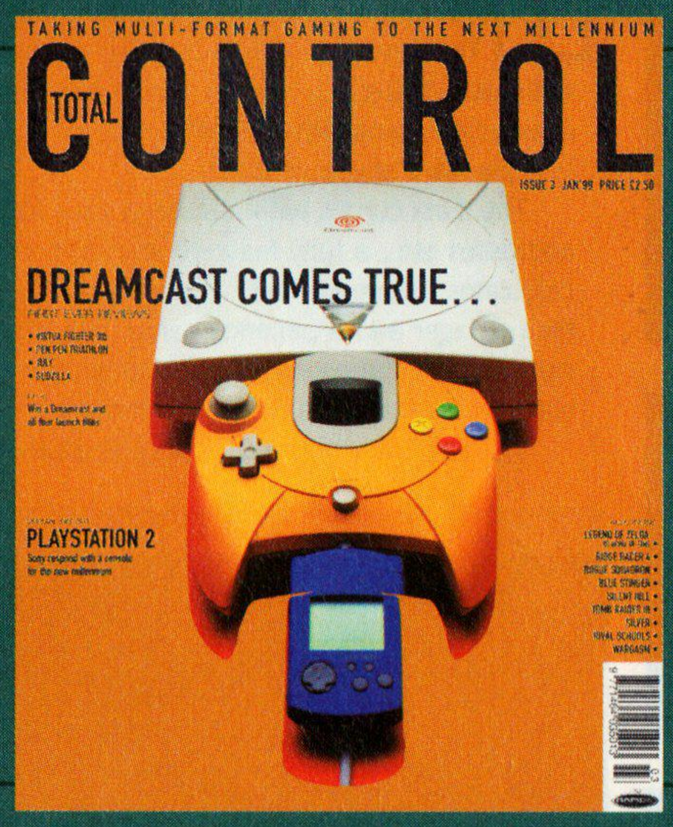
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- *Climax Landers* beta
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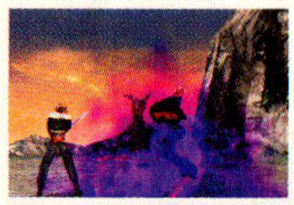
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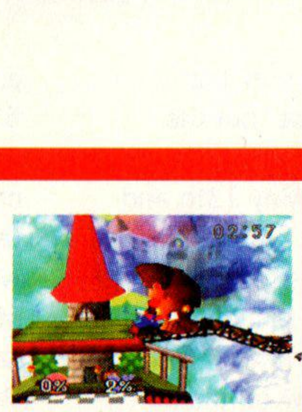
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IMPORT SOFTWARE SUPPLIED BY: PLAYGROUND PRODUCTIONS

FOREIGN**OFFICE**

This month's Foreign Office takes **a look at Sega's plans** for **the future**, the technology behind the Dreamcast and some **new shots of *Shenmue*...**

FINAL FANTASY IN YOUR POCKET

Square have revealed that *Final Fantasy VIII* will be compatible with the PocketStation. The game will have you playing as a Chocobo in your own miniature RPG. The game is titled *Odekake Chocobo RPG*.

GET READY FOR A RUMBLE

Sega have announced that the Puru Puru peripheral for Dreamcast will be available to buy in March. The device, a rumble pack, will retail for Y1800 – about £15 – and will be compatible with *Puyo Puyoon* and *Psychic Force* as well as *Sonic Adventure*.

US DREAMCAST DATE SET

It has been revealed that the US release date for the Dreamcast has been set for September 9th 1999. This date of 9/9/99 follows the release of the Saturn (5/5/96) and the Mega Drive (9/9/89).

DREAMCAST CONTINUES TO GROW

Sega have announced Dreamcast sales as of January, and it looks like they have a good chance of reaching their goal of a million units sold by March. The Dreamcast has so far shifted 500,000 units in Japan, and may have sold more if Sega had made more units available.

WE WANT 50% OF THE MARKET, SAYS SEGA CHIEF

Shoichiro Irimajiri talks of Sega's aspirations

In a recent interview with Japanese magazine Asia Biztech, Sega's Shoichiro Irimajiri has stated that he is optimistic about the Dreamcast's long-term future. He said that, "I can't come up with any specific figures at this time, but within five years from 1999, we plan to get more than 50 percent share of the world's market for home-use video game machines. With that in mind, we plan to push Dreamcast into the US and European markets during business year 1999." He went on to say that, "The fact that the high-performance, low-priced Dreamcast was put on the market at that time made it gain the upper hand over video game machines to be sold by other companies in the future. We are also calling for cooperation by many software houses so that we won't lag behind others in the amount of software, and we are sure about the results, too. We are fully confident about competing with other companies' next generation video game machines." Other subject matters touched upon were the lack of Dreamcast units in stores, "It's true that production hasn't caught up, but we expect to resolve the production problem early in 1999 so that users will be able to get one at any of the stores without advance orders. I don't think the delay in production will bar its popularisation."

Dreamcast™

E3 AROUND THE CORNER

Electronic Entertainment Expo announced

Okay, it's no big surprise, but the fifth E3 has been confirmed for May 13th and will be held in Los Angeles. This is the most important game show of the year, where anyone who's anyone gathers to show off their new games/hardware. The show will last three days and be held in the Los Angeles Conference Center, and it will stretch over 520,000 square feet. "E3 has evolved into a world-class stage for the new talent, artistry and creativity which is changing the face of home entertainment," said Douglas Lowenstein, President of the IDSA. "The show's exhibits are a one-of-a-kind opportunity to discover the latest interactive trends and exciting new technological breakthroughs that reflect both business and cultural phenomena. Whether you are focused on interactive entertainment development, buying or marketing, E3 is the time and place to get it done. Whether you are writing about or investing in this industry, E3 gives you insight into what's hot and what's not, what's new and what's next in this incredibly dynamic industry."

Expect Sega to have an enormous presence this year with the build up to the US release of Dreamcast, but there may be a few surprises from Sony and Nintendo to douse their flames. You never know, there may even be announcements of PlayStation 2 and Nintendo 2000...

UPDATE: SHENMUE DREAMCAST

We know we've been hyping it for a while now, but this game just gets better and better. Apart from the new screenshots you see below, some interesting details have been revealed about Sega's forthcoming epic game. First of all, the game will be set in the 1980s (the story begins in winter 1986), and everything in it will be relative to that time.

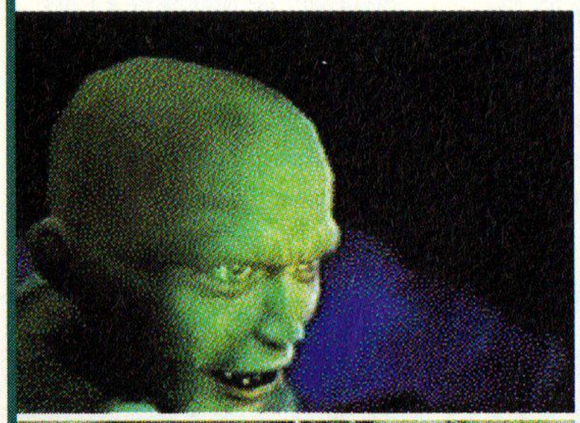
There's also news on the Western versions – the game will definitely be released in the US and UK, but it is unlikely to be translated. Because the game contains so much speech, Sega are toying with the idea of subtitling the game. How this will affect the game's appeal regarding Western games players has yet to be seen.

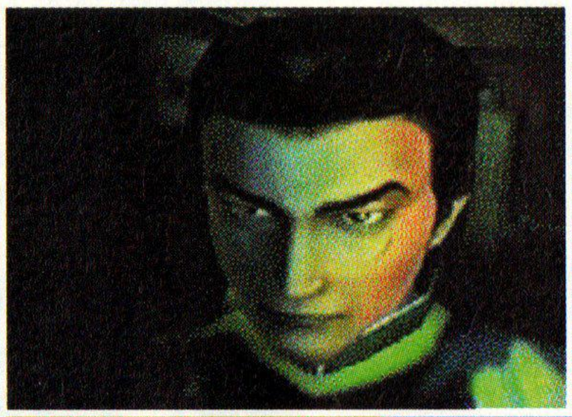
As a bonus, the game features an arcade. Here players will be able to play some of Sega's classic games – *Outrun*, *Afterburner*, *Space Harrier* and *Super Hang On*. Bear in mind, though, as *Shenmue* runs in real-time, that spending too much time (and money) in the arcade will obviously affect your game.

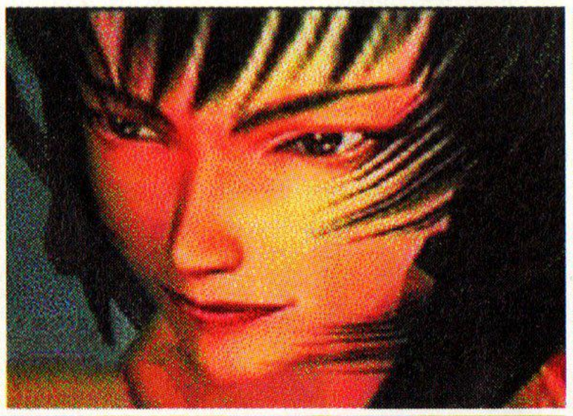








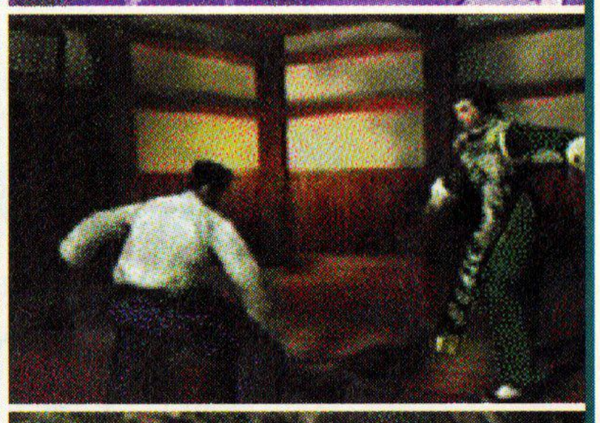


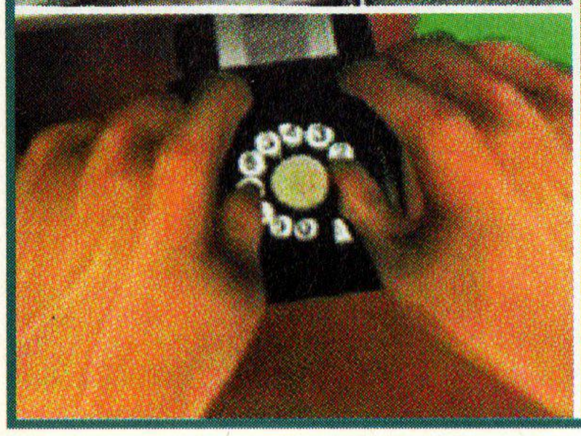


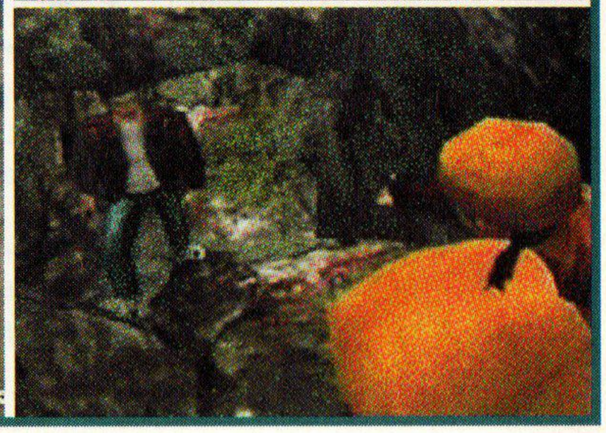












WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

New details on the technology behind the Dreamcast

Translations of some of the more technical aspects of the Dreamcast have taken a while to arrive in the UK. CSK Research Institute have announced full details on two of the resources that are available for Dreamcast developers. ADX audio software allows the machine to play CD quality audio while simultaneously reading and processing data; the software has the added bonus of taking up only 1% of the processor's resources. It can also be used to rapidly compress or decompress high quality samples with no loss in quality.

CSK's MPEG Softdec visual technology is the driving force behind the very impressive pre-rendered/video scenes that are to appear in the early titles. It essentially allows the machine to play back TV quality video at 24 frames per second, and is also versatile enough to allow for advanced real-time graphics to be overlaid on top of the video. Developers have been quick to use the new technology. All four launch titles used the MPEG Softdec software, and titles such as *Sonic Adventure*, *Aero Dancing* and *Buggy Heat* will be using both technologies come their release.



FERRARI F355 STREETS AHEAD

AM2's upcoming Naomi-based Ferrari F355 is unlikely to appear on Dreamcast. With Dreamcast and Naomi software so similar, why is this? Well, according to sources, Ferrari F355 will use four Naomi arcade boards – approximately eight times the power of a Dreamcast.

Ferrari F355 will also use a three monitor set-up to create a 'virtual reality' experience for drivers – players will be surrounded by the game. Despite the gap between the arcade machine and the Dreamcast, however, we shouldn't rule out a special home version.

NINTENDO AND SONY TOP OF THE TREE

Big two dominate in the Christmas rush

According to the Wall Street Journal, Nintendo and Sony are currently leading the video game market in the US. Sony are top of the pack in terms of hardware sales, while Nintendo have the lead on software receipts. *Zelda 64* recorded $150 million in sales (2.5 million units) over December, while hardware and software sales totalled $6.3 billion in 1998. Sony sold 2.9 million PlayStations in December – a two-thirds share of the market – while Nintendo sold 1.4 million N64s over the same period, giving them a third of the market. However, Sony outsold Nintendo in terms of overall software sales, shifting a total of 4.7 million units, even though Nintendo had five out of the top ten best selling games. An analyst at NPD claimed that hardware sales could rise by as much as 10-12 percent in 1999.

SPEAK TO YOUR DREAMCAST

Sega announce voice recognition system

Following Nintendo's Japanese-only release of *Pikachu Genki De Chu*, which allows gamers to quite literally talk to their virtual pet, Sega have announced a similar system for the Dreamcast.

The first game that will use this 'microphone pak' will be a game called *Seaman*. Again, it is a virtual pet game, but this time it will feature fish with the heads of men. However, the growth of your pet will vary depending on how you treat him/her/it or whatever it is. Don't expect this title to be released in the West.

DREAMCAST: A NEW TYPE OF PC

Dreamcast peripherals to break boundaries

Reports are breaking from Japan that Sega are about to announce both a hard drive and printer for the Dreamcast. This move would shift the console even closer to its PC roots, blurring the boundaries between the two formats. If you take a look at the back of a Dreamcast, you'll notice that it has a serial port with USB (Universal Serial Bus) related functions – a connection port that allows almost every kind of peripheral to be connected. Rumours are also rife that Sega will be releasing a LAN (Local Area Network) device for the Dreamcast. This would allow a number of Dreamcasts to be linked together for multiplayer games.

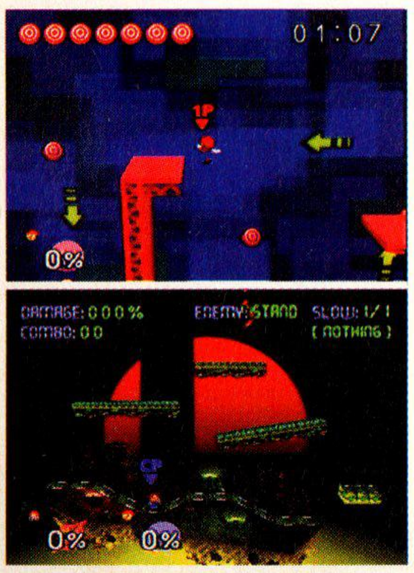
JAPANESE DREAMCAST DATES

Sega have announced the latest release dates for Dreamcast products in Japan...

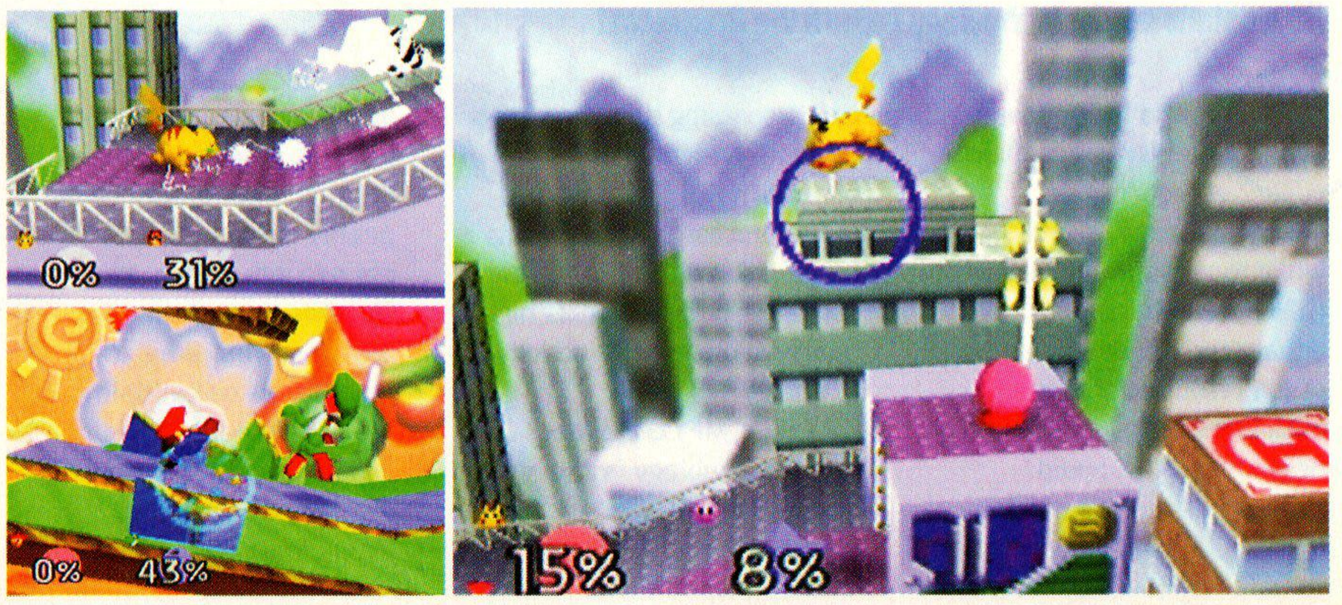
DC Steering Wheel (Sega – Accessory)	Out Now
Sengoku Turb (NEC – RPG)	Out Now
Sega Rally 2 (Sega – Driving)	Out Now
Evolution Sting (RPG)	Out Now
Power Stone (Capcom – Fighting)	Out Now
Aero Dancing (CRI – Flight Sim)	4/3/99
Puyo Puyo (Sega – Puzzle)	4/3/99
House of the Dead 2 (Sega – Shooting)	18/3/99
Blue Stinger (Climax – Adventure)	25/3/99
Marvel Vs (Capcom – Fighting)	March '99
Buggy Heat (CRI – Racing)	1/4/99

NINTENDO'S SMASH HIT

Smash Brothers for the West?



Reports are coming in from Japan that Nintendo's latest release, the intriguing *All-Star Smash Brothers*, is selling like hot cakes. Apparently, many of the major retail stores in Japan have sold out of the game. Although *Smash Brothers* has not yet been confirmed for the overseas market, it seems that encouraging sales figures have as good as cemented a world release.



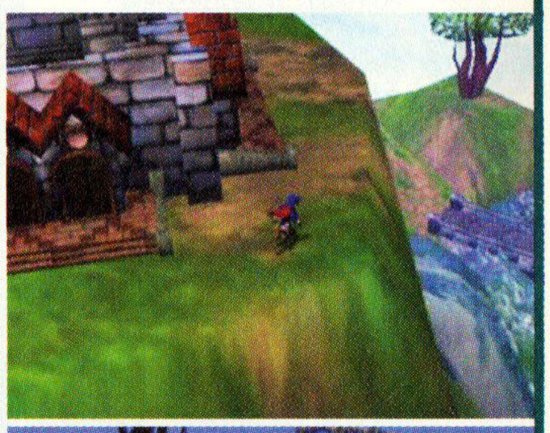
UPDATE: CLIMAX LANDERS

Climax Entertainment's action RPG for the Dreamcast is now nearing completion, and judging from these latest screenshots it could be a key title, certainly in its native Japan. Although it remains to be seen, Climax promise an adventure to rival the N64's *Zelda*. Both the game world and the combat are obviously influenced by Miyamoto's classic, but with the added power of Dreamcast this could be the most visually stunning RPG yet. It is still unknown whether or not the title will be translated to English for the US and UK markets. We certainly hope so...



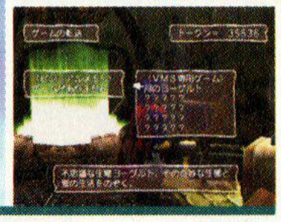
















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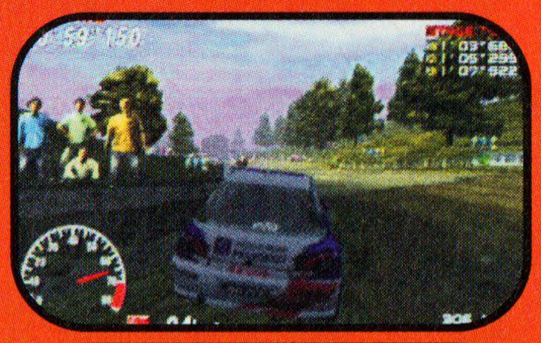
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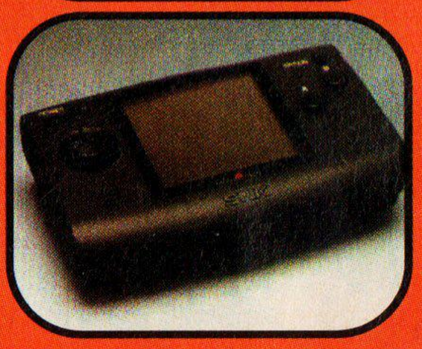


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- VIRTUA FIGHTER 3TB
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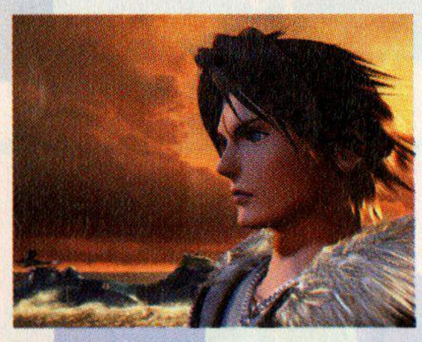
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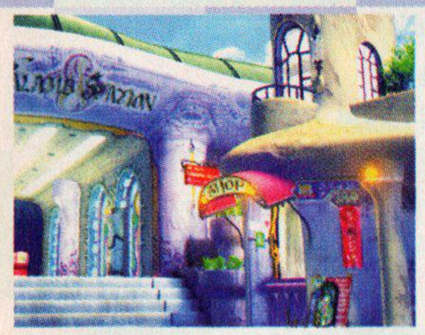
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It's Hip To Be SQUARE

Few **games developers** have such a reputation for quality as Square. Their **smash hit, *Final Fantasy VII***, was hailed as one of the **greatest computer games** ever, and *FFVIII* could prove to be even better. But that's just **part of the story**; this month Total CONTROL **takes a look** at the **past, present and future** of Square.







SquareSoft started life in Japan as Square Co. Ltd., a small developer writing games exclusively for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), known as the Famicom in Japan. Square were finding life hard and were in desperate need of a major hit to boost their fading fortunes. The head of the company, Tomoyuki Takechi, and executive producer Hironobu Sakaguchi, hit upon the idea of an unprecedented one megabyte cartridge containing a story-based, character-led role-playing game. At the time, *Dragon Quest*, an RPG developed by rival company Enix was selling well in Japan.

This new game was to be very much a last-ditch effort for the ailing company; if it failed, then the company would fail with it. They poured their last Yen into the development of the project, and in recognition of this fact they named the game *Final Fantasy*. And the rest, as they say in the big book of writer's cliches, is history.

SQUARESOFT STARTED LIFE IN JAPAN AS SQUARE CO. LTD., A SMALL DEVELOPER WRITING GAMES EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM (NES)

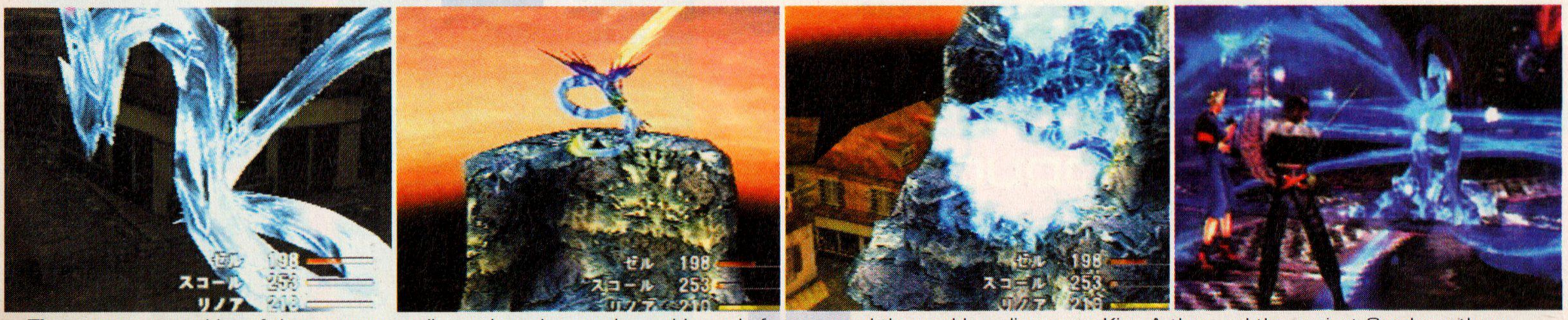
Fantastic success

Final Fantasy was a massive hit, and went on to spawn a long line of sequels. The series has gone from strength to strength, and has sold by the million throughout the world. The latest in the saga, *Final Fantasy VII*, was released in 1997, selling three million copies within two days of its Japanese release, and has gone on to sell nearly six million copies world-wide. The series as a whole has sold more than eighteen million units so far. Square's fortunes have grown alongside the games they have created, and they are now one of the most successful games developers in the world. Many of their games have sold over a million copies, including *Romancing Sa-Ga* and *Secret of Mana*. Square Co. Ltd. are now the biggest third-party console game company in Japan.

In 1989, under the name SquareSoft, the company opened their first office in America, in Redmond, Washington. This was an effort to establish the company as a major player in the market outside Japan, as well as keeping up their close working relationship with Nintendo. The *Final Fantasy* games were subsequently sold in America, although the numbering differed so that the Japanese game known as *Final Fantasy IV* was now called *Final Fantasy II* in America.

Moving out

In 1996, after developing the *Mario* RPG, Square were finally in a position to sever their ties to Nintendo, giving them the freedom they needed to develop games for other formats. Since 1996 they have been developing games for the Sony PlayStation, as



The awesome graphics of the summon spells are based on myths and legends from around the world as diverse as King Arthur and the ancient Greek pantheon

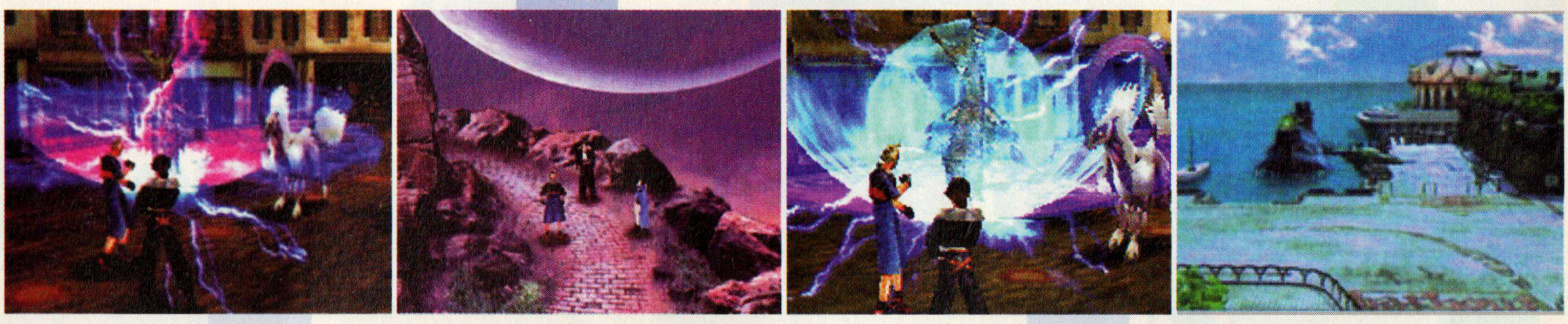
BRAVE FENCER MUSASHI

Although best known for 'serious' RPG titles, Square have proved that when they turn their hand to humour they can do it better than most. *Brave Fencer Musashi* is an action adventure set in the mythical Allucaneet Kingdom, a world under threat of destruction from the Wizard of Darkness. Featuring characters with names like Princess Fillet, Scribe Shanky, Butler Livers and the spy Gingerelle, quirky humour plays a big part in the game. When the Princess casts the fabled Summon Hero spell, the legendary Musashi appears to save the land.

Featuring Square's trademark of stunning graphics and animation, along with great characterisation and great gameplay, this is a superb game. Although *Brave Fencer Musashi* is currently only available as a Japanese language import, a US version is supposed to be appearing sometime soon.



Humour plays a big part in *Brave Fencer Musashi*. The cartoon-like style of the characters and the quirky storyline fit in well with the bizarre but brilliant graphics



Square have always been known for spectacular artwork, and *Final Fantasy VIII* is no exception. The special effects push the limits of the PlayStation's abilities

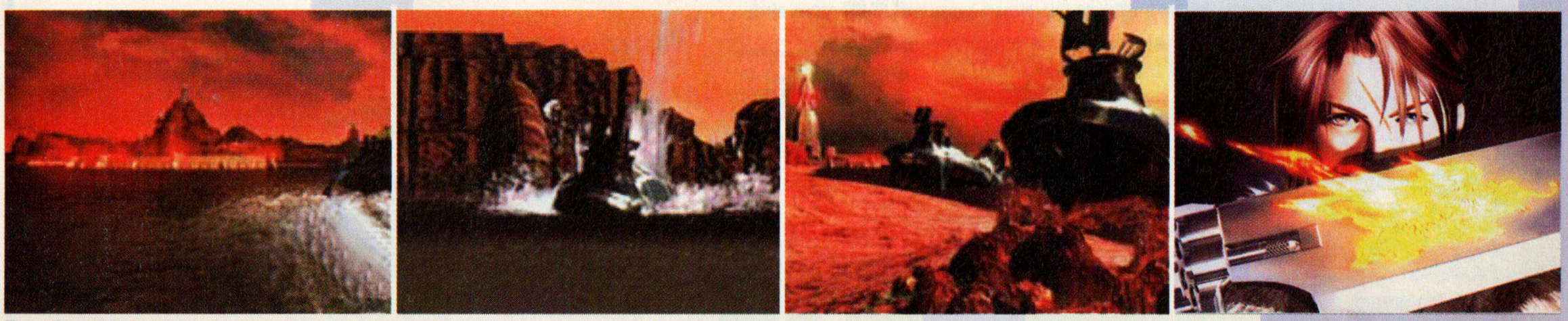
well as for the PC. *Final Fantasy VII* was the first of the series to be developed for the PlayStation and has become the biggest selling game ever on that platform, but more was to follow.
In 1998, Square signed a reciprocal agreement with Electronic Arts, forming two new corporate entities. Square Electronic Arts L.L.C., based in Costa Mesa, California, handles the publishing and distribution of all Squaresoft products in North America, while Electronic Arts Square deals with the sale of EA products in Japan. The deal has worked well, and last year saw the release of a series of new titles which have taken the company away from their traditional territory of RPGs into other genres, such as beat-'em-ups, strategy, racing and adventure games.

Surf's up

Having left their Redmond studios in 1996, shortly after the split with Nintendo, Square now have facilities in Marina del Rey, California near their sister company Square USA, as well as maintaining development studios in the beautiful landscape of Honolulu, Hawaii. Both parts of the company come under the ownership of parent company, Square Co. Ltd. in Japan.

Their current range of games are selling well all around the world, and the company's reputation continues to grow. Advance orders for the forthcoming title *Final Fantasy VIII* have already exceeded a million units in Japan, and *Ehrgeiz: God Bless the Ring*, a beat-'em-up featuring some of the characters from *Final Fantasy VII*, is one of the most talked about new fighting games for the PlayStation. Other new titles such as *Parasite Eve*, *Xenogears*, *Brave Fencer Musashi* and *Bushido Blade 2*, have received widespread critical acclaim. Although many of Square's games are never officially released in the UK, they remain popular choices on the Japanese import market.

SQUARE NOW HAVE FACILITIES IN MARINA DEL REY, CALIFORNIA, AND IN THE BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE OF HONOLULU, HAWAII, AS WELL AS THE PARENT COMPANY IN JAPAN

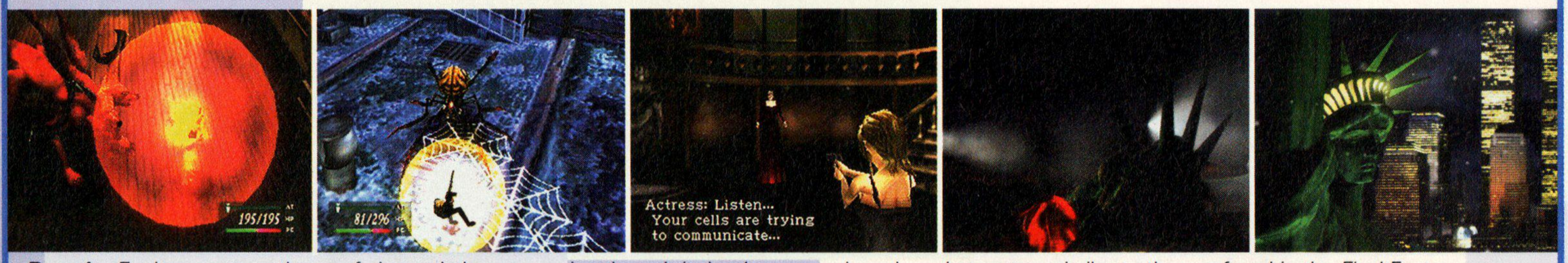


Dazzling FMV sequences are a Square trademark. These stills are taken from the introduction of Final Fantasy VIII, the latest title in their long-running RPG series

PARASITE EVE

Using a stunning combination of pre-rendered backgrounds and glorious movie quality FMV, *Parasite Eve* tells the story of Aya Brea, a New York cop, and Eve, a genetically modified being with horrific powers. Although similar in theme to Capcom's *Resident Evil*, Squaresoft's game manages to have its own unique style. The turn-based combat system is similar to that in *Final Fantasy VII*, with a time meter limiting the rate of attacks, but the ability to move about between attacks enables the player to dodge and evade. The vast choice of weapons and the option to customise them to produce your own super weapons gives the game an additional depth.

Parasite Eve blurs the line between film and game, with a plot which is advanced by the use of some of the best video sequences ever seen. Although the game can be completed in just ten hours of play, it has an incredible atmosphere and is a very enjoyable experience. It is a little unoriginal for such an innovative company as Square, but a brilliant piece of work nonetheless.



***Parasite** Eve* has a strong theme of cinematic horror running through it, but has a turn-based combat system similar to the one found in the *Final Fantasy* games

The Words of Sakaguchi: The Man Behind the Legend

Square's executive producer, Hironobu Sakaguchi, is the creative genius behind the *Final Fantasy* series and is a notoriously difficult man to get an interview with. Here are a few selected words of wisdom about the origins of the world's greatest RPG.

Sakaguchi on how the *Final Fantasy* series began:
"In 1986, when the first *Dragon Quest* series came out in Japan. It was very popular among the gamers. I wanted to create something that was completely different from that. The concept behind the whole series was to give birth to the 'ultimate (or final) fantasy story' – *Final Fantasy*.

Sakaguchi on gaming technology:
"The game consoles have developed greatly in the past ten-plus years. We have always had, and will, continue to challenge the technology to the limits. Of course, an attractive game cannot be made without researching and studying the technical aspects of the consoles. We will always seek to make the most of those possibilities."

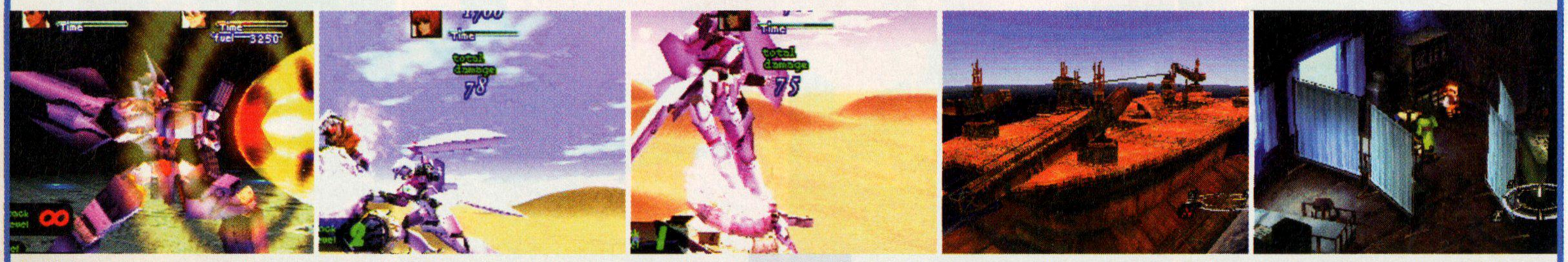
Sakaguchi on the origins of the *Final Fantasy* characters:
"So much work goes into creating one single character that is 'live' in the game. The creation of a character is not handled by just one person/creator; one will give it a figure, one will give it movement, another will give it personality/attitude with words and so on. I'm sure that each individual had his own model/character in mind. The imagination and skills of those creators come into one to complete the characters."

XENOGEARS

Preceding the imminent release of *Final Fantasy VIII*, *Xenogears* is Square's most recent full-scale RPG. It centres on the exploits of Fei, a typical big-eyed, spiky-haired loner with special powers and memory problems. It also features that perennial Japanese favourite, enormous walking robot fighting machines. Who first came up with that idea, and why? *Xenogears* has a plotline of Square's usual epic proportions, and this is expounded at length with a great deal of text. For casual gamers, this can make the game slow and disjointed, but for hard-core RPG fans, it is well up to the high standards we have come to expect from the Final Fantasists.

The graphics are also well up to scratch, using a real-time engine and sprite-based characters, and a camera angle which can be moved around to get the best view. The combat system is closer to a beat-'em-up game in style, with big differences between your character when in his gear and when fighting alone.

Xenogears isn't a sequel to *Final Fantasy VII*, but it will keep role-players happy until *FF VIII* comes along.

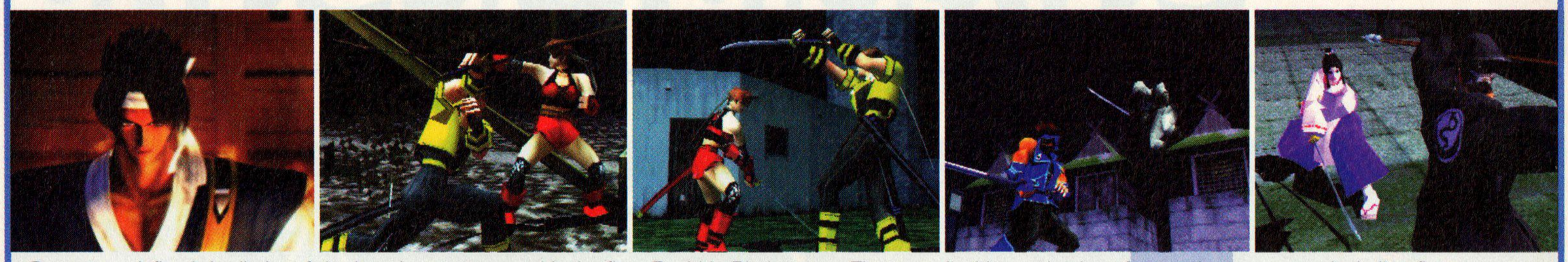


Although it relies on a large amount of text to carry the intricate storyline, *Xenogears* has a combat system closer in style to a beat-'em-up game such as *Tekken*

BUSHIDO BLADE 2

Far too many beat-'em-ups look so similar that it takes a close inspection to tell them apart. Not so with *Bushido Blade* and its sequel. Bushido is the Japanese Samurai warrior's code, governing behaviour, honour and combat – especially the use of weapons. It is the weapons which set the *Bushido Blade* games apart from the vast majority of other fighting games. In *Bushido Blade 2* there are six main weapons available, mainly varieties of swords and spears, plus a range of secondary weapons. These include such things as poignards, knives and fans, but also projectile weapons including throwing stars and even firearms.

The fighting system includes a wealth of detail. Moves for attack and defence are based on the capabilities of the weapon being used, and with skill it is possible to kill even the toughest foe with a single blow. There are two viewpoint modes, either a standard side view or a more difficult but satisfying first-person perspective. *Bushido Blade 2* is a remarkable game, and takes the genre of beat-'em-ups to a new level. It is available on English language American import.



Square re-defined the limits of the beat-'em-up genre with the first *Bushido Blade* game. The sequel adds a selection of secondary weapons, including firearms

Sakaguchi on the *Final Fantasy* storyline:
"It all started out with several members with their own ideas for the story. They were all in bits and pieces at first, from a portion of the setting, a piece of the character, a part of the story, etc. We all looked at what everyone had brought to create this masterpiece. Basically, we kept the good and took away the bad ideas. With a main storyline in place, we made numerous adjustments to make it into the form of a game. Because of the changes during development, the entire story didn't come to a close until the last minute."

Sakaguchi on the global appeal of the *Final Fantasy* series:
"In Japan, many Square fans and gamers have their favourite *Final Fantasy* game, that not necessarily being *FFVII*. As you know, some previous games of the series were localised and released in North America."

Sakaguchi on how many *Final Fantasy* games they may make:
"I would like to continue with the series as time (and energy!) permits. I'm aiming for maybe up to 30."

Sakaguchi on his favourite games:
"I'm a big fan of simulation RPGs. I admit to playing most simulation RPGs released by other developers. I would definitely want to work on something like Final Fantasy Tactics."

FANTASY TEAM

Producer: Hironobu Sakaguchi
The original concept of the *Final Fantasy* games came from the fertile mind of Hironobu Sakaguchi, who has been the game's producer throughout the entire series. Although the creation of almost any computer game is a team effort, it is Sakaguchi who has provided the impetus and vision.

Director (FF I-III): Hiromichi Tanaka
Although he still works for Square on many major projects, the director of the first three games in the series has now handed over responsibility to Yoshinori Kitase

Director (FF IV-VIII): Yoshinori Kitase
An aspiring film director, Kitase found the Japanese movie industry too restrictive. Drawing on his background, he has brought a unique cinematic style to the series.

Composer: Nobuo Uematsu
Responsible for the distinctive scores of all of the *Final Fantasy* series, Uematsu is a versatile musician who has been compared to the film soundtrack composer John Williams. The *Final Fantasy* soundtracks have been released as albums in Japan, as has a solo album by Uematsu

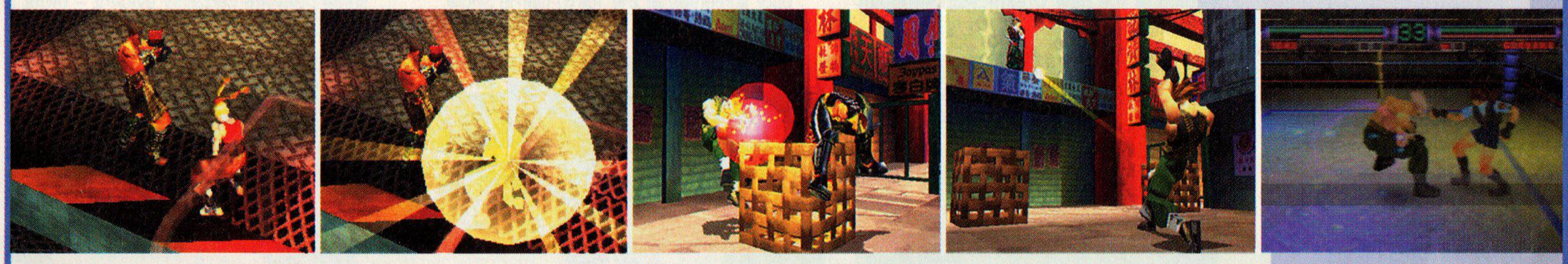
Character Artist (FF I-VI): Yoshitaka Amano
Amano is a well-known and respected artist in Japan, and his amazing artwork on the first six games helped to build and define the characters in the games.

Character Artist (FF VII-VIII): Tetsuya Nomura
The 3D polygon animations of the latest games requires a different approach to art, so Square called in Nomura, a traditional manga artist, to do the characters.

EHRGEIZ: GOD BLESS THE RING

Having expanded the boundaries of the beat-'em-up genre once with *Bushido Blade*, Square have set out do it again with *Ehrgeiz: God Bless the Ring*. Despite the rather appalling name, this co-production with Namco (creators of the *Tekken* series) is a complex multi-levelled fighting game featuring the characters Cloud, Tifa and Sephiroth from *Final Fantasy VII*. The main battle arena mode is three-dimensional, with combat taking place on multiple levels, and the characters can run about with complete freedom. All the characters have special moves, and many also have missile weapons. The standard of animation is very high, and the use of the PlayStation's high-res mode makes the game look terrific.

There are several battle modes built into the game, including the Godless Quest, a random dungeon adventure; and Battle Panel, a sort of combat Othello.
Ehrgeiz doesn't quite match the complexity of *Tekken 3*, but it doesn't try to. Instead it offers full 3D combat and superb graphics, with some superb sub-games. A beat-'em-up for RPG fans.



Having pushed the limits of beat-'em-ups in one direction with *Bushido Blade*, Square added 3D role-playing elements and some very familiar characters for *Ehrgeiz*

SEGA RALLY 2 CHAMPIONSHIP





CONTROL 90+ AWARD

Sega's third major Dreamcast launch has had a troubled development. Would the many worries of a **poor arcade conversion** prove justified?

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	Dreamcast
PUBLISHER	Sega
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Racing Sim
RELEASE	Out Now
PLAYGROUND PRICE	£64.99
VMS	Yes
ON-LINE	Yes

TAKING CONTROL

Anticipating what could have been the most graphically accomplished game on the Dreamcast so far, the initial impression was of slight disappointment. But after only a few races the game's true positive points become more than apparent. This is a true arcade racing game – great gameplay and one of the most entertaining on any system. You soon realise there are going to be many late nights ahead.

Sega's Saturn port of the original *Sega Rally* was a huge success, significantly helping to shift what was rapidly becoming an ill-fated machine at the time – few could argue with the accuracy of the arcade conversion. It comes as no surprise, then, that the successor to the game that managed to keep the Saturn afloat for as long as it did will complete a trio of games that will be used to drive the launch of the new Dreamcast. Although Sega have held back on its release for longer than expected, Dreamcast owners will now be able to place it next to *Virtua Fighter 3tb* and *Sonic Adventure* on their games shelf.

Many coin-op conversions of the past have turned out to be disappointments; a worry expressed towards *Sega Rally 2* from an early stage in its development. Its poor screening at the Tokyo Game Show was a major contributor towards this, but the delay of its release seems to have paid off. *Sega Rally 2 Championship* is certainly no disappointment.

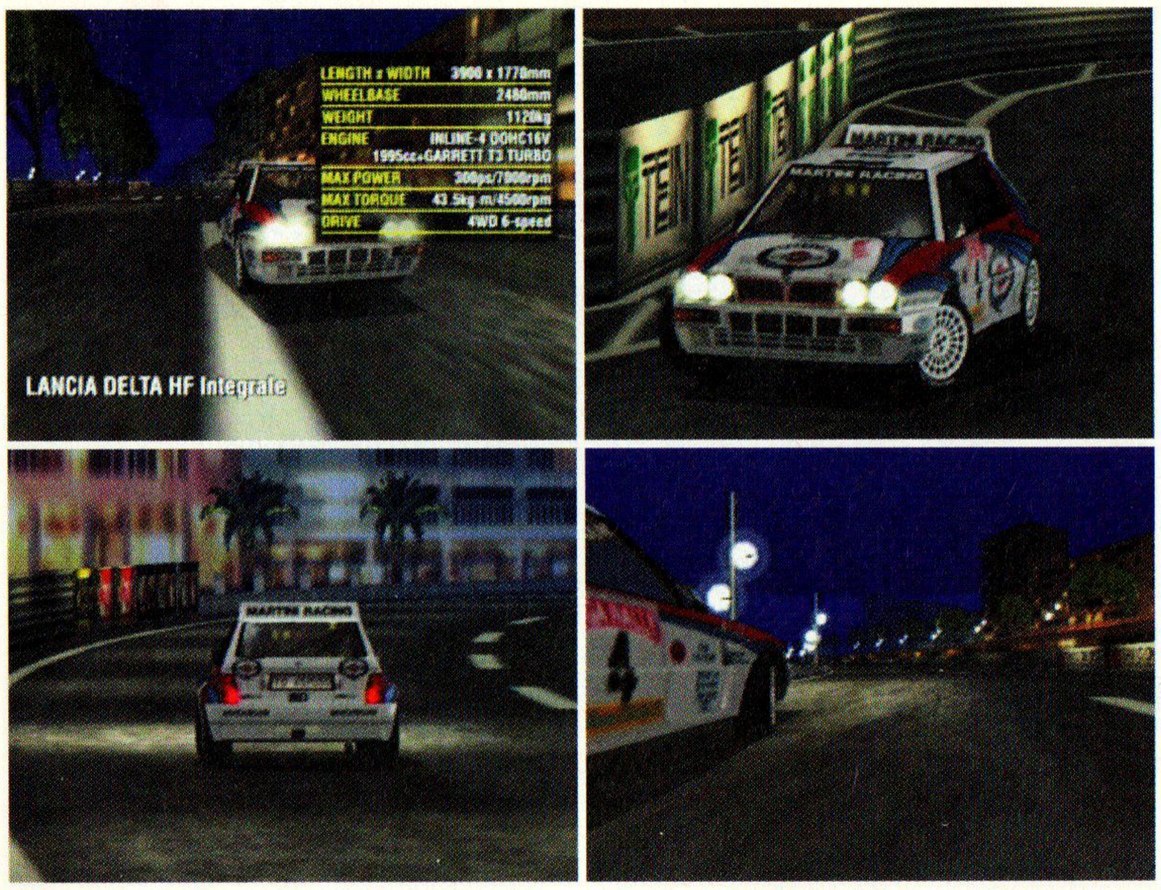
YOU DO HAVE A RACE POSITION, BUT THE OPPOSING CARS MAY AS WELL BE GHOSTS USED TO INFORM YOU OF HOW WELL YOU'VE BEEN RACING UP TO THAT POINT

Time to breath

Sega have gone on record as saying that their Dreamcast ports will actually be better games than their arcade counterparts. The improvements on show here are certainly evident – more



The car customisation screens make a significant difference to the vehicles' handling. Secret paint jobs can be found as well



The replay feature may not be as good as *GT*'s, but it's still very impressive

cars, more tracks and more game modes – but there have also been sacrifices made to the graphical and technical sides. Fortunately (and far more importantly), the gameplay is an almost exact replica.

TRADITIONALLY YOU SPEND THE MAJORITY OF THE RACE SLIDING INTO THE SCREEN FACING FROM LEFT TO RIGHT OR VICE-VERSA AS YOU STRUGGLE TO MAKE IT AROUND EACH CORNER

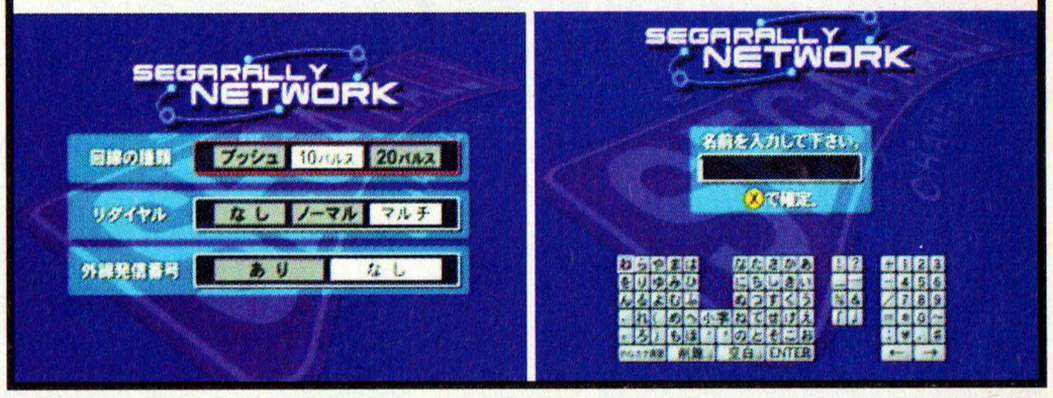
The three cars from the arcade game all make a return for the Dreamcast version, but they are now joined by a number of others, bringing the total available to 20. All are not immediately accessible, and some must be unlocked by achieving certain targets within the game. Each differs vastly, with enough variation for everyone to find the one with the perfect handling for his or her own driving style. Before each race the car set-up option allows you to easily change suspension and gear ratios to further fine tune it to the conditions ahead. Things like tyres are automatically selected for you, but you still have the option of going back and making a different choice if you feel they are ineffective. The type of gearbox that you fit to the car can also be very influential in certain races. Most cars usually come with a choice of four (two manual and two automatic), with between four and seven steps in each. Because the models are all accurate replicas of the real thing, there are no damage models in the game, but other visual effects like mud build ups look superb.

Get a grip

Sega Rally is well-known for its excellent car handling. Traditionally you spend the majority of the race sliding into the screen facing from left to right or vice-versa as you struggle to make it around each corner without hitting the verges on either side. The car control is fairly innovative; the two shoulder buttons are used for braking and acceleration, presumably because of their analogue capability. It seems a bit awkward at first, but it soon becomes the much-preferred method. *Sega Rally 2* has obviously been designed with the imminent steering wheel add-on in mind, and, unlike many other racing games, *Rally 2* would benefit immensely from the accessory. Rather than having to get each corner exactly right, this is more about choosing the right moment to steer into the bend, knowing that the back of the car will be thrown out as soon as you begin the

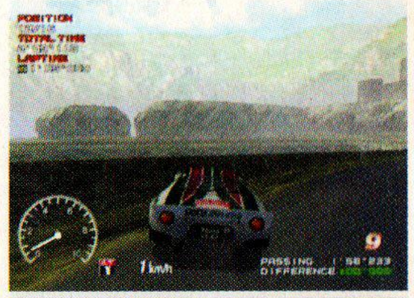
CASTING SEGA'S NET

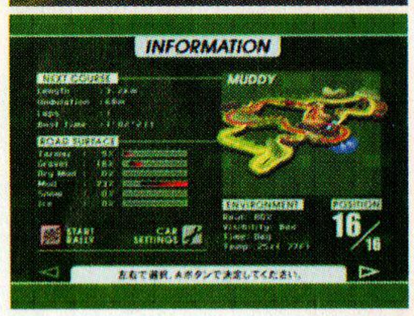
One feature that will no doubt prove immensely popular in Japan is the Network option. Using Sega's own server, players can log onto this and take part in a proper race against some slightly more challenging opposition. We have not yet been able to test this, but keep an eye out in future issues for more information about the Dreamcast's network capabilities



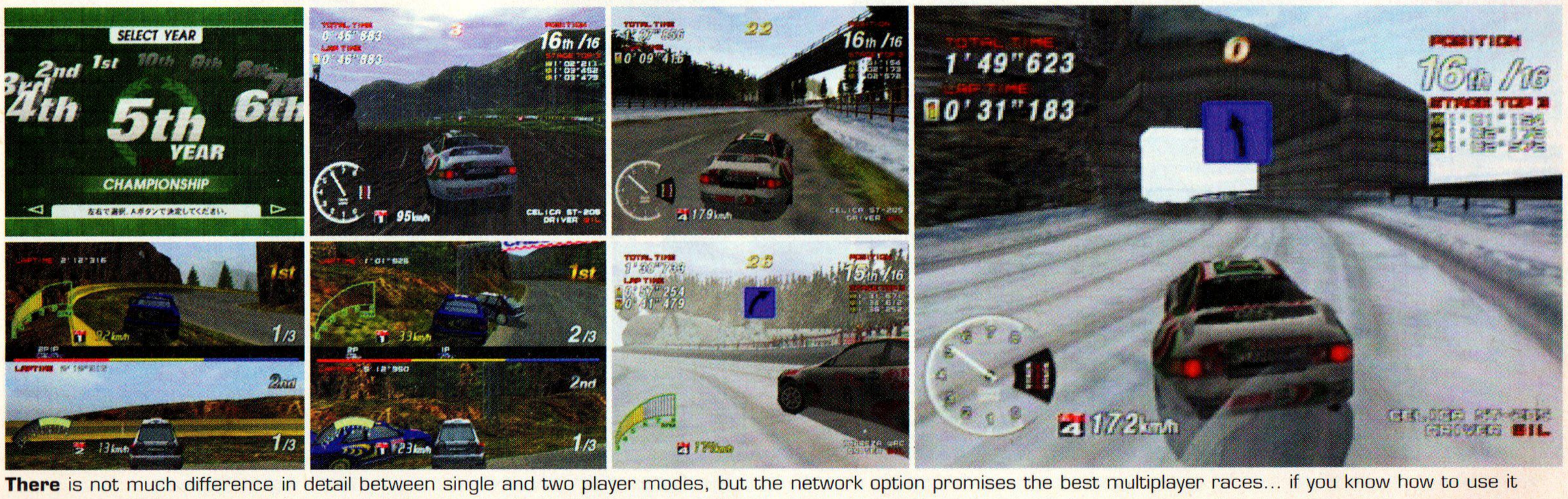




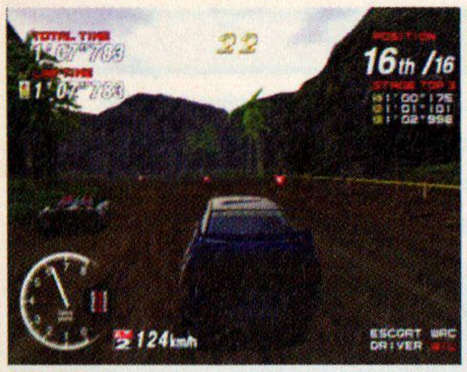




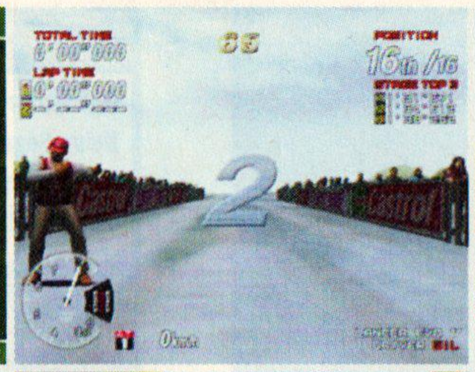
From this screen you can check out the conditions for the next race

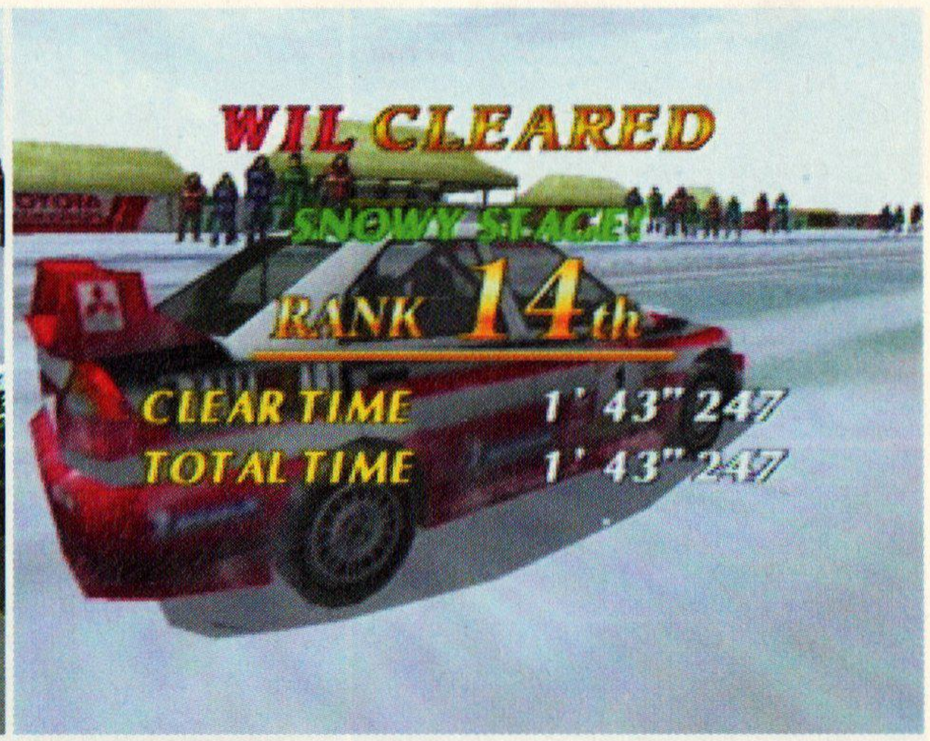


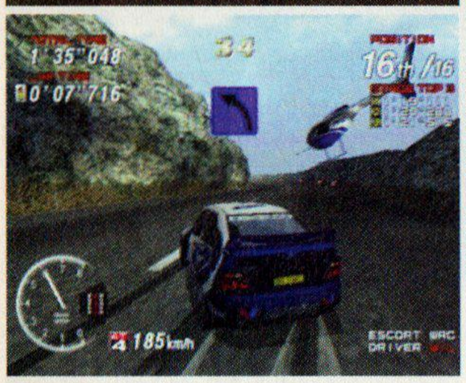
There is not much difference in detail between single and two player modes, but the network option promises the best multiplayer races... if you know how to use it

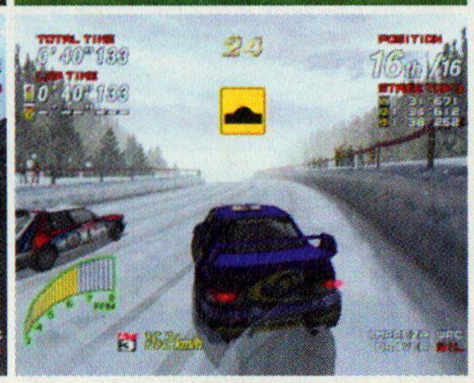














Skidding on mud or snow surfaces sprays dirt on to your car as you progress through the race. Learning how to achieve these powerslides is vital to win

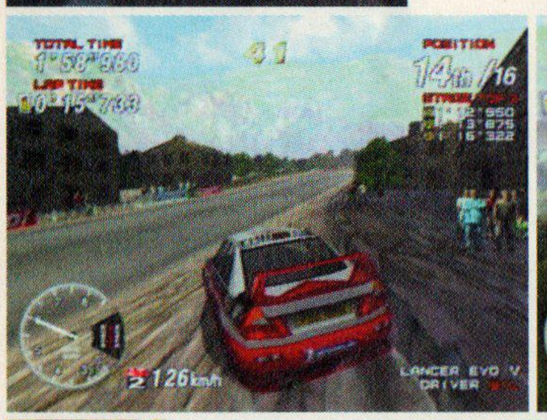


turn, and then turning sharply into your skid as you are nearly through it so that the rear of the car snaps back straight. Accurate timing of your brakes and accelerator and choosing the right racing line determines the level of success in a race, but different surfaces change the handling so you won't master it easily. There is generally far more room for error in *Sega Rally 2*, but making a perfect hairpin at the maximum possible speed and shaving a few seconds off your fastest lap times can provide immense satisfaction. The car does occasionally feels as if there is not enough grip, but it's not a big problem.

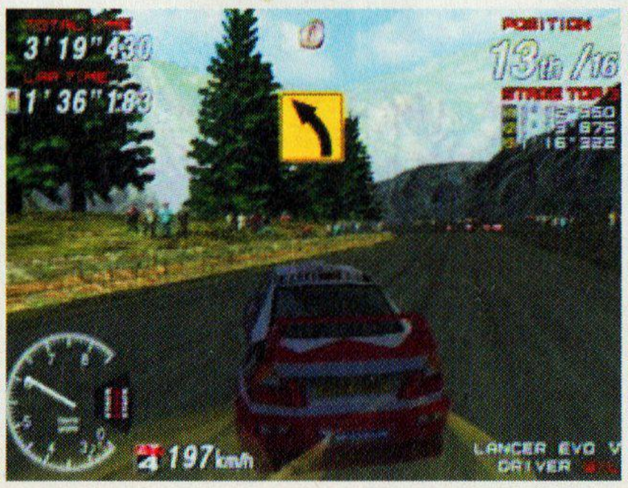
This is cult fiction

With such a big cult following, the arcade mode predictably remains pretty much the same. It's a race to the next checkpoint before your tight time limit expires, but the three tracks have now been bolstered by an additional four. With the attention to detail of the older tracks already impressive, it's good to see that Sega have not let that slip for the new courses, which match them in every respect. The additional game modes are the Time Trial and the Ten Year Championship. The first needs no introduction, while the Challenge mode provides the bulk of all single player action. Each year consists of four single lap courses. Your position and time is carried on from the previous race, and depending on the total time you may or may not proceed to the next. Finishing in first place will take a very long time and a lot of dedicated practice, but managing to do so brings rewards such as unlocking one of the twelve bonus cars. Obviously there are not 40 courses on the CD, but some of the tracks have been designed with a number of different routes so you are often led through the level in a different way. With some very varied weather conditions as well, all of the seasons are very different and increase in difficulty as you progress.

From a technical point of view I was not as impressed with *Sega Rally 2* as I was after seeing *Sonic Adventure* for the first time. Although it does look great, the screen update was occasionally slow when there were multiple cars on screen. The resolution seems lower as well, with noticeable (but not intrusive) blockiness, especially on distant cars. The cars do look very impressive – certainly of accelerated PC quality – and some of the reflection effects are superb, while the transparent windows allow you to see the full interior of each car. But some of the other effects, particularly the rain and snow, look extremely rushed, and after seeing *Sonic* it looks as if it some of the game could have been slightly more smoothed down. After recently fitting a new Voodoo Banshee card in my PC, perhaps I'm slightly biased in that respect – *Sega Rally 2* is certainly the best looking racing game you could get on a home console.







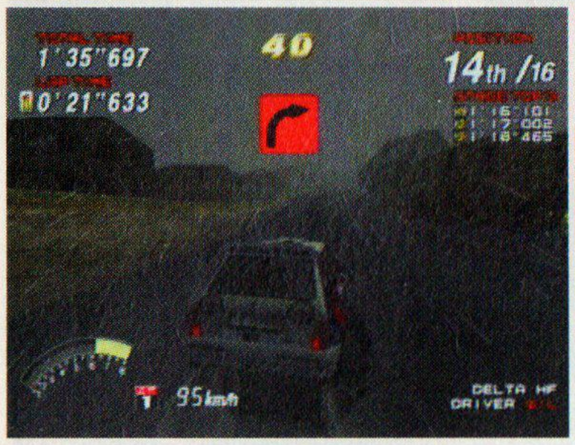


There are loads of nice touches in the game. As you drive past the crowds you will notice the flashes of their cameras – it looks great in night-time levels










In an average race you'll cross many different terrains that change the handling model for your car, which can occasionally make you feel as if you're separated from the road

The sound quality is also a very mixed bag. The in-game effects are great and there are far more lines of speech than before, but some of the music is highly questionable; I don't care what you say, but music tracks with jazz-style big band solos really do not suit this style of game. Still, after a while you don't really notice it, and there are a few more appropriate music tracks to be heard. Alternatively, just turn the music off.

following what appears to be a strictly predetermined route around every course. They serve as no challenge whatsoever. Instead they are more like moving obstacles that pop up every now and again for you to avoid as you rush past them. Yes, you do have a race position, but the opposing cars may as well be ghosts used to inform you of how well you've been racing up to that point. True to the arcade, this is still a game that encourages you to

Sega Rally 2 Championship is a cult game that will be lapped up by the fans. Like *Virtua Fighter 3tb*, it's not quite arcade perfect, but the new additions more than counter that for me. But even though this is a fantastic racing game, PlayStation owners can still boast that their console retains the number one title of the genre; *Rally 2* never looked like challenging the detail and depth of *GT*, and it's no surprise that it falls a fair way short. Still, it's certainly a must-buy for owners of the new console. Easy to pick up and very difficult to put down, *Sega Rally 2 Championship* is hugely playable, supremely challenging and immense fun. It'll last you a while too; even after you finish the game, you'll still be attempting top shave split seconds off your lap times for a long time to come. **Will**

EASY TO PICK UP AND VERY DIFFICULT TO PUT DOWN, SEGA RALLY 2 CHAMPIONSHIP IS HUGELY PLAYABLE, SUPREMELY CHALLENGING AND IMMENSE FUN

You give me road rage

The only real excuse for you not to like this game is the AI of the other cars that you'll be racing against (racing may not even be the right word). They are far too spread out, drive significantly slower than you and race against the clock rather than anything else. It's a shame for some, and without the arcade following it would be tempting to be critical, but – and especially if you're already a fan of the game – it's nothing that will detract from your enjoyment.

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ○○○○○

If there was ever going to be a conversion the PC would be the most likely to receive it, but it seems very unlikely at the moment.

N64 ○○○○○

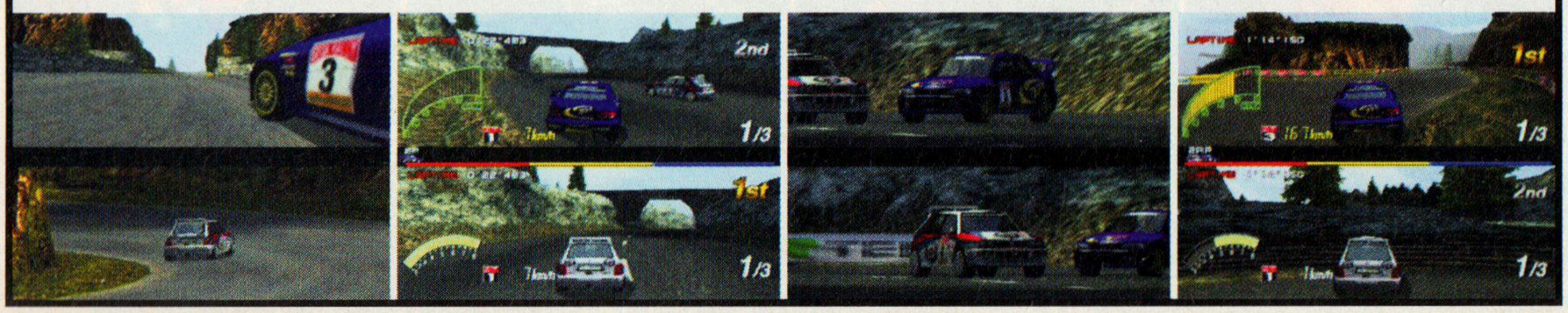
No, no and no. It's about as likely as Mario becoming Sonic's new sidekick, so I wouldn't lose any sleep over it.

PlayStation ○○○○○

Sega releasing one of their major Dreamcast releases on their rival machine? Not in this life.

TWO BE THIS GOOD...

Sadly there is no four-player race mode in *Rally 2* – you'll have to make do with the two-player battle option. It's a simple race between two cars to the finish over a number of laps, there are no other CPU cars at all and overall it's a fairly drab affair. It does increase the game's life significantly, though; there's not too much loss in detail and it moves along fairly quickly. It's just a shame that this mode was not better implemented – it deserved to be so much more.



IMPORT SOFTWARE SUPPLIED BY:	PLAYGROUND PRODUCTIONS

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Sega Rally 2
GRAPHICS	87
SOUND	82
PLAYABILITY	93
OVERALL Out of 100	90

STREET FIGHTER ZERO 3

We've seen a lot of **Capcom's jewels** these past few years. Now they've elongated their list of ***Street Fighter* prequels** with ***Street Fighter Zero 3.*** In my opinion, a must-have game.

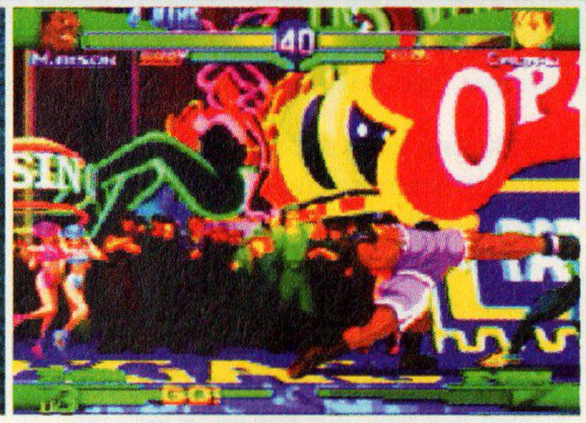














INFORMATION

FORMAT	PlayStation
PUBLISHER	Virgin
DEVELOPER	Capcom
STYLE	Beat-'em-up
RELEASE	Out Now
PLAYGROUND PRICE	£59.99
PLAYERS	1-2
ANALOGUE	No
DUAL SHOCK	Yes
MEMORY CARD	One Block

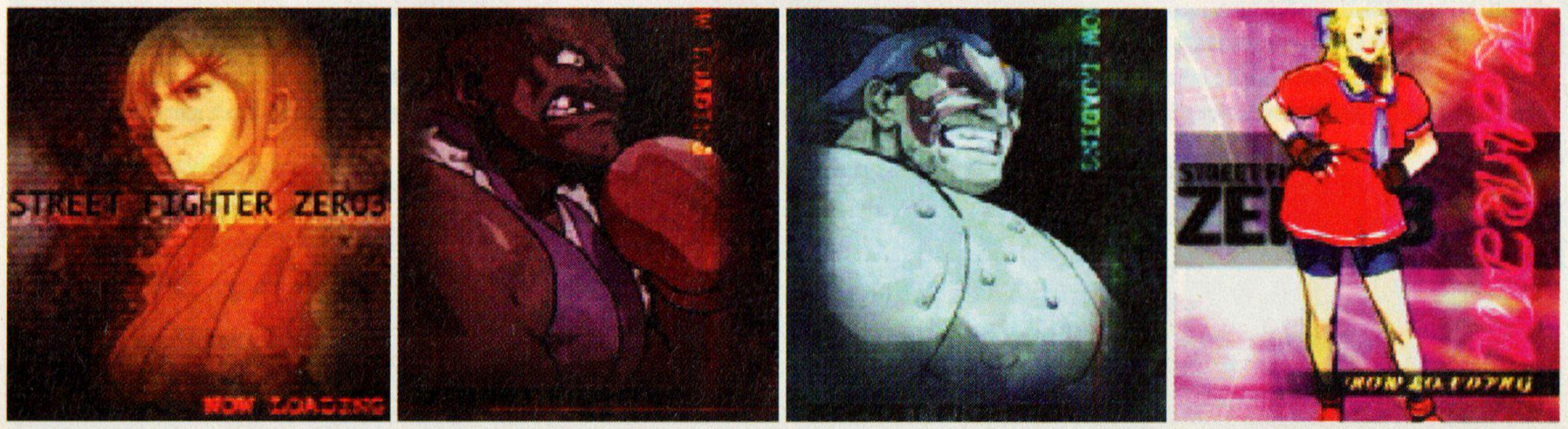
TAKING CONTROL

One of the major difficulties you will almost always find with this type of game on the PlayStation is the control system. A four-buttoned pad is simply not right when you want to pull off some awesome moves that kind of send your opponent into oblivion with a stream of blue-green light. The only way I found to get around this problem was to configure my own buttons. Thank God for the options screen!

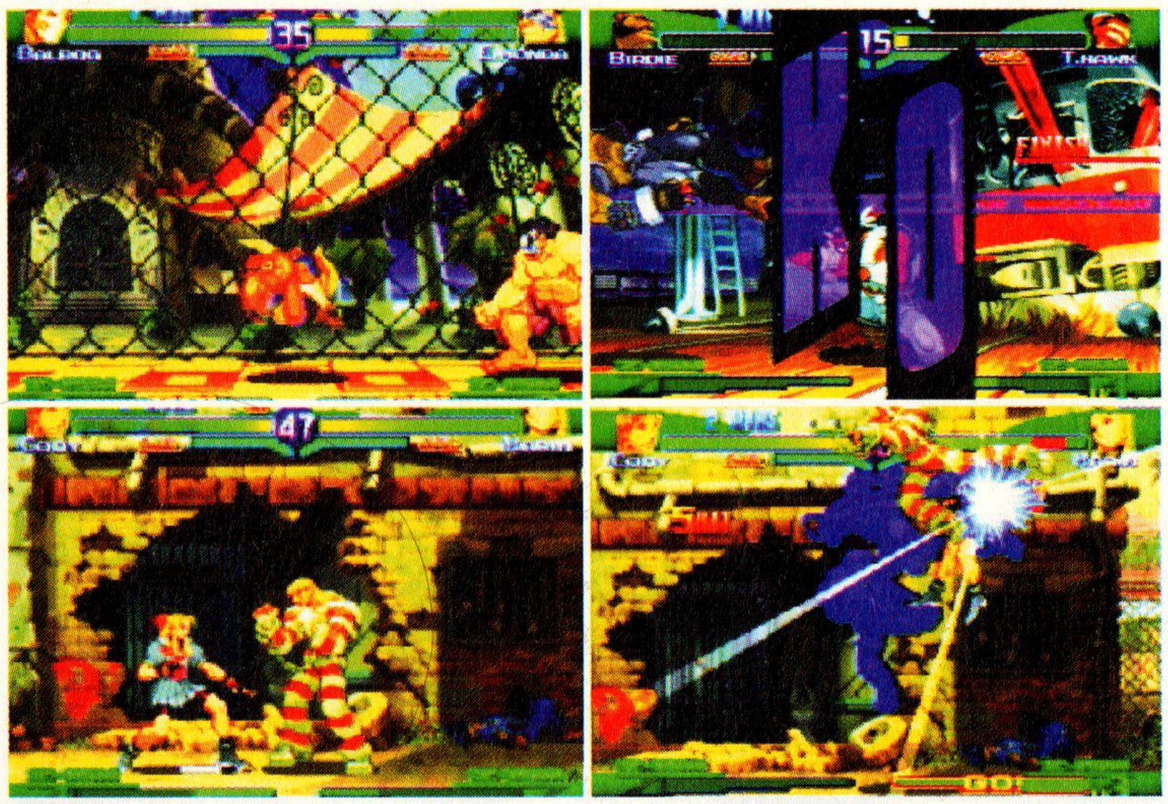
After the appaling renditions of *X-Men vs Street Fighter Ex* and *Vampire Saviour Ex*, I must admit I was a bit wary about what exactly I was going to find with this one. The PlayStation isn't known for its glorious 2D games, and as often as not the games turn out terrible because of all the sacrifices that have to be made (I'm not mentioning *KOF* in particular, but...). Anyway, I gave it a go, and now it may be the right time to get out the crockery and set the dinner table, for I shall be eating humble pie! This game enacted its theme of violence by taking my doubts and shoving them in a rather suspect orifice! In short, I have been impressed. In fact, it is so far apart from its predecessors that I might even buy it myself.

There's a nuvver one!

Capcom have always been up there as the top 2D beat-'em-up creators with few rivals, the best competition coming from another group of gaming stalwarts, SNK. Lately, in a bid to monopolise the rights to all the world's 2D punch-up violence, they've further endeared themselves to fans by resurrecting some favourite characters of old (namely some *Final Fight* ones) and pitting them against the 'lil ole *Street Fighters*, and they've created some match-ups we could only have dreamt of prior to their respective games i.e. a brawl between Spiderman and Juggernaut, or a Cyberbot fighting Ryu – you must admit they are a pretty odd pair. All this, coupled with over-the-top moves and specials, has re-invented the 2D smack-'em-up and made the world stand up and take notice of the scene again.



Most of the characters will be instantly recognisable as they have appeared in other *Street Fighter* games in the past



Backgrounds are functional at best, but then who really cares with great gameplay

SF Zero 3: Top or flop?

Well, everything started off pretty much okay. Plenty of artwork, lots of shouting. Nothing much seemed out of the ordinary (apart from the logo flying in from all angles). I battled through to the character select screen and, lo and behold, I was confronted with what at first appeared to be a group of Millwall fans in cartoon form. There were a massive 29 characters to pick from, all looking like they wanted a fight and staring at you as if you had just insulted their mother – and that's just to start with. Obviously secret characters or differently costumed characters are still rich for the pickings then.

Naturally, I chose Sagat (well, you have to have a hard nut if you want to kick ass!), and the game gave me a choice of three fighting styles – X-ism, V-ism and Z-ism. It's a bit like the modes in *SF Alpha 2*, with the choice of only two turbo settings.

A nice surprise was the fairly limited loading times. These were made shorter by being given some smart drawings of the opponent to gaze at (or gawp at, if you happen to be fighting Juni or Juli!). There are a host of new characters (or not-so-new in some cases, but new to the series). It hasn't quite been revealed to me exactly how they fit into the plot yet... well, not in English, anyhow. Juni and Juli are very similar in looks to Cammy, but judging by the way they salute the 'mystically' appearing M.Bison in their winning pose, I think it would be safe to assume they are working for him to get Cammy back. The others? Well, you tell me – I don't speak Japanese.

THERE WERE A MASSIVE 29 CHARACTERS TO PICK FROM, ALL LOOKING LIKE THEY WANTED A FIGHT AND STARING AT YOU AS IF YOU HAD JUST INSULTED THEIR MOTHER

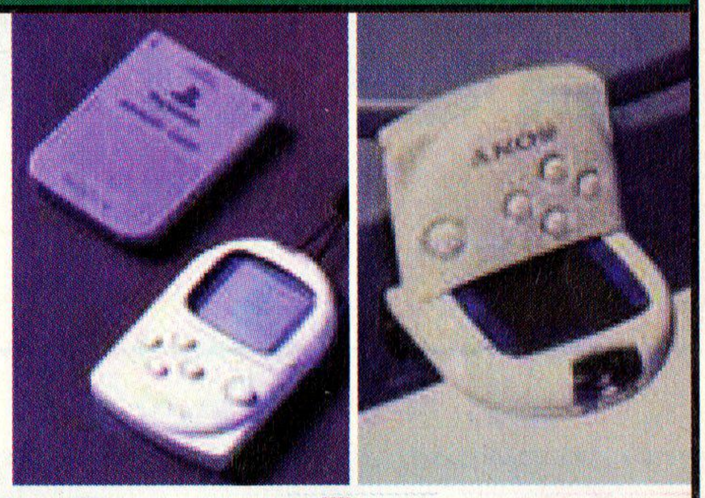
But I want to play with a new toy, mummy!

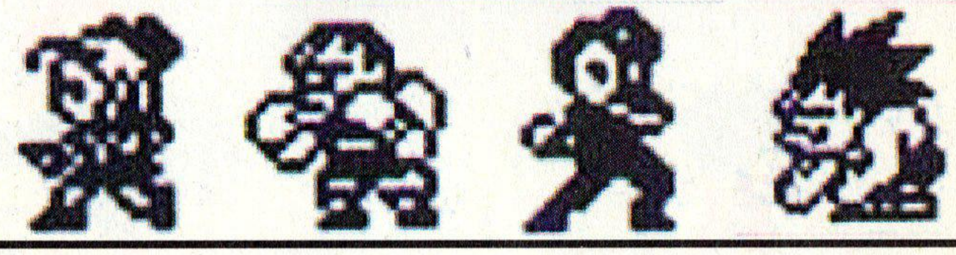
A host of new gimmicks on its own couldn't have done the job of regaining any interest in the series on my behalf. However, the game itself, if I was to put a word to it, would be more... well, Americanised. There's heap loads of shouting, big metallic sounding crashes, and I swear to God I could have placed money on Don King popping up from somewhere, it's that loud! To cram even more features into the game, it makes use of the Dual Shock pad, just to give it the real feel of a 'rumble in the jungle'. The best new toys, though, have to be the characters, and here they are: R. Mika, Juni, Juli, Karin; and also the revamped characters: T. Hawk, E. Honda, Cody, Fei Long, Cammy, Dee Jay, Vega, Balrog and Blanka.

What's my opinion? I honestly think that this is a beat-'em-up that novices and experienced players can enjoy alike; the plots are still there, the artwork is pretty amazing, and the Dual Shock function is handled well. This was quite a good reprieve for the people of Capcom – they made a fantastic job with the arcade, and an equally good translation in the form of the PlayStation. I think you will be as satisfied with the game as I was, and if it wasn't for a few bugs in my version (i.e. some dodgy music and a few un-noticeably missing frames – so I'm fussy, alright!) then this game would have scraped into the lower nineties. As far as I can see, The best 2D beat-'em-up you can get on the PlayStation is sat here on my lap. And you can't have it! (Not yet, anyway). **Wayne**

POCKET FIGHTERS

Street Fighter Zero 3 is the first game to really make use of the new Sony PocketStation. At the time of writing we have still been unable to get hold of one from Japan, but we understand that fighters can be trained Tamagotchi style, enhancing their skills before taking on other players.







Animation in *Street Fighter* games is famous for taking liberties, as E. Honda's detached forearm shows

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ●○○○○

Although it is quite easily possible, the PC isn't renowned for its back catalogue of *Street Fighter* games. I don't think this one will make it either.

N64 ●○○○○

Highly unlikely, but not totally out of the question. However, the market hasn't yet been broken into on the machine – and it probably won't with this game.

Dreamcast ●●○○○

It is almost certain that a 2D beat-'em-up will be made for the Dreamcast, but it probably won't be this one because it wouldn't make best use of the machine. Perhaps an enhanced version of *Marvel vs Capcom.*

IMPORT SOFTWARE SUPPLIED BY: PLAYGROUND PRODUCTIONS

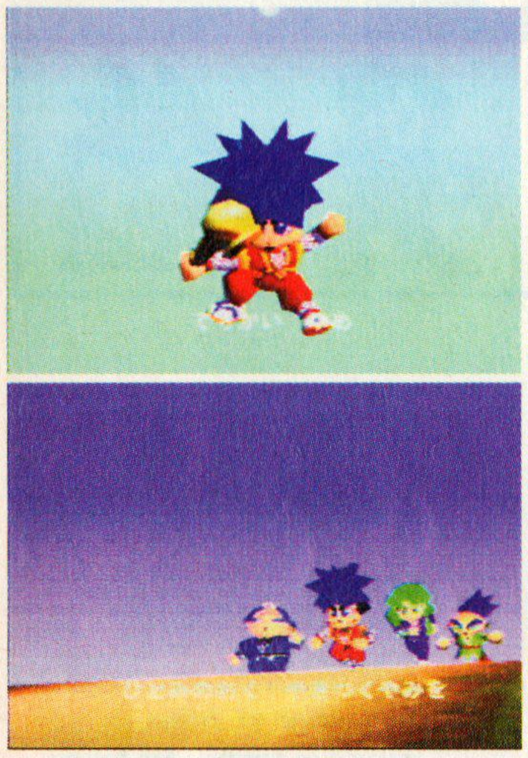
VERDICT

GAME NAME	Street Fighter Zero 3
GRAPHICS	78
SOUND	80
PLAYABILITY	81
OVERALL Out of 100	80



New characters to Street Fighter include a few that many of you will recognise from the *Final Fight* series of beat-'em-ups

GOEMON'S GREAT ADVENTURE











Mystical Ninja 64 was a minor hit on the N64 – and deservedly so. Its mix of **bizarre Japanese humour** and gameplay not too far from *Mario 64* went down very well. Now **Goemon returns** in the sequel, ***Goemon's Great Adventure***.

TAKING CONTROL

Great. The Mystical Ninja returns in all his wacky Japanese glory, only this time most of it's in 2D. Oh, maybe it's not going to be that much fun after all...

INFORMATION

FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	Konami
DEVELOPER	In-House
STYLE	Platformer
RELEASE	Out Now
PLAYGROUND PRICE	£59.99
PLAYERS	One
RUMBLE PAK	Yes
MEMORY PAK	Yes
EXPANSION PAK	No

Mystical Ninja 64 was, and still is, one of the most underrated and interesting 3D platformers available on the N64. The mix of near *Mario* quality graphics and gameplay and some bizarre Japanese humour made this game a unique experience, and a very enjoyable one to boot. However, *Mystical Ninja 64* did stray from the famous series' ridged formula, replacing the classic two-player sideways scrolling action with the three dimensional free-roaming kind. Fans of the original SNES games will be dead chuffed to hear that this latest incarnation of the blue-haired one reverts back to the 'good old days' – the majority of *Goemon's Great Adventure* is sideways scrolling, and it's all two-player co-operative (if that's what you like).

Age before beauty

The story follows the wise old man (he's appeared in every *Goemon* game so far) and his invention of a machine that can re-animate the dead. Sounds like a good idea? Well, it is, until the machine is stolen by an evil warlord who decides to use it to re-animate ghosts in an attempt to take control over all of medieval Japan. Cue Goemon







Our hero gets to meet what appears to be the Japanese equivalent of Santa Claus before continuing on his adventure



A MOTLEY CREW

The four characters from *Mystical Ninja 64* return and, of course, they are all playable. Each has his or her own abilities, and changing between them can make a big difference to the gameplay.



Goemon

Goemon is the 'average' character of the group; good speed, can jump fairly well, but he's not that powerful.



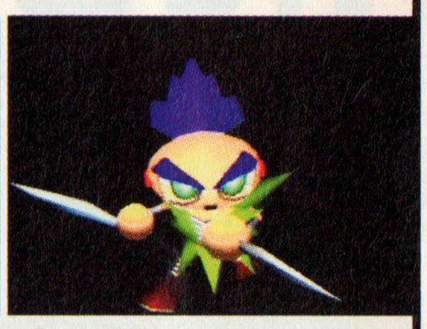
Ebisumaru

Goemon's little rotund sidekick is fairly slow, but he is by far the most powerful of all the playable characters.



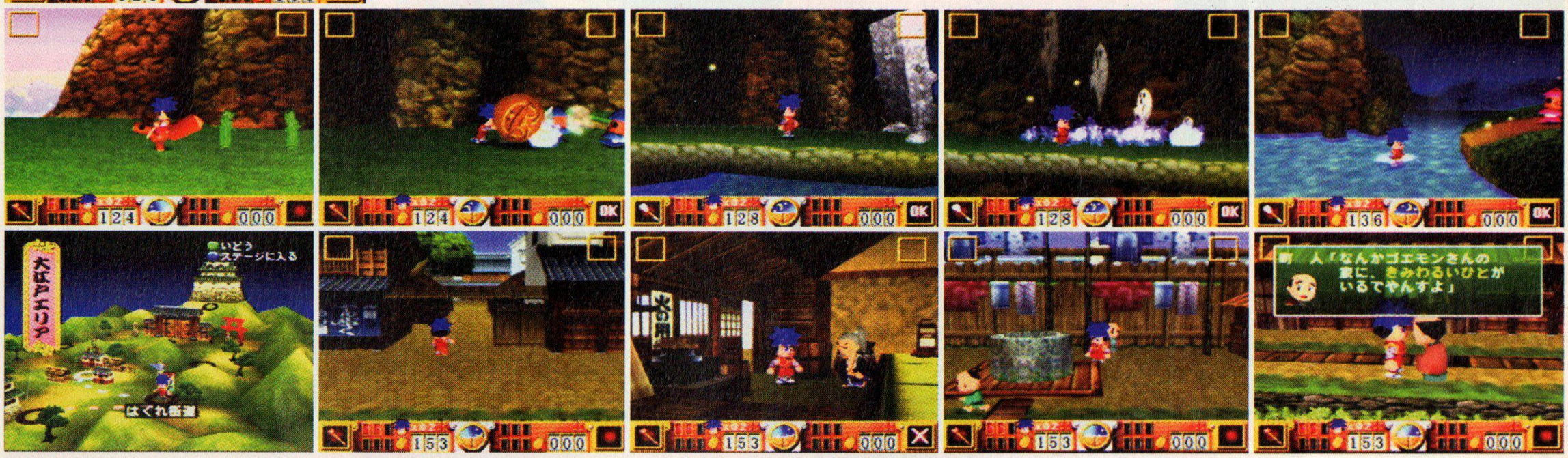
Yae

A green-haired she-ninja, Yae is a master sword fighter who also has the unusual ability to turn into a mermaid.



Sasuke

A miniature mechanical ninja, Sasuke is the fastest of the bunch and can upgrade his projectile attacks.



Much of the game can be played without the language barrier being a problem, however, we'd recommend most players wait for the inevitable western version

and his lardy sidekick, Ebisumaru, to jump to the rescue and restore peace to their native land.

The gameplay in *Goemon's Great Adventure* comes in the form of two different types – RPG-style sections and traditional 2D platform action. Inside towns and villages players are free to explore and talk to the inhabitants, while outside towns the gameplay is simple 2D left to right scrolling stuff. There's little more taxing than the usual bashing of enemies and jumping on platforms – it's something of a disappointment after the open landscapes of the last *Goemon* game. There are some redeeming features – you can acquire and 'ride' various vehicles such as mechanical horses and sumo suits, and levels gain multiple routes as you get further into the game. This doesn't really add much to the gameplay – it's just there for a bit of variety really. There is a great deal to make you smile later on in *GGA*, however, and this comes in the shape of sub-games and the sections which require Goemon to climb into the giant roller skating robot. These sections are played from a first-person perspective inside a giant robot that looks, well, like a giant Goemon doll. You have the ability to perform a number of punch and kick moves, as well as range of specials. These sections are basically taken straight from *Mystical Ninja 64*, except here Goemon gets to fight multiple enemies – easily the most interesting aspect of this game.

BASICALLY, IF YOU WERE TO TRANSLATE ONE OF THE SNES'S GOEMON GAMES DIRECTLY INTO THE 64-BIT WORLD THEN THIS IS WHAT IT WOULD BECOME

Like *Mystical Ninja 64*, *GGA* bases its levels loosely on ancient Japanese locations and historical sites. So, in places the game takes on an almost unique look – can you think of many other games set in medieval Japan? *Goemon's Great Adventure* looks as good as you would expect from the N64; solid environments with a good amount of detail in textures – the village sections look excellent. The environments are affected by the passing of time, but this is more of an aesthetic thing and it doesn't have much of a bearing on the gameplay.

I just don't understand!

As it stands, the Japanese text is too much of a barrier to make the game accessible, unless, of course, you have more than a small understanding of Japanese. If the truth be told, we only managed to get as far as the first village without any help from a translation, so pure trial and error won't get you that far. If you do have access to the Internet and can find a translation, then *Goemon's Great Adventure* is a lot of fun. Despite the 2D nature of the title, it's very similar to *Mystical Ninja 64* in concept but lacks the sensation of freedom of that game.

The 2D sections are too limited and lack any real challenge, while the RPG parts (exploring villages and so forth) go some way to restoring the game's credibility. Basically, if you were to translate one of the SNES's *Goemon* games directly into the 64-Bit world then this is what it would become. It's a formula that's worked well in Japan in the past, so there's no reason why it shouldn't work again. It remains to be seen, however, how UK games players take to the bizarre Japanese nature of this game. If you enjoyed the last Mystical Ninja outing, then you'll enjoy this. **Nick**

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ○○○○○

Konami have yet to release a game for the PC, so it is highly unlikely. The Japanese nature of this game wouldn't go down well on the PC either.

PlayStation ○○○○○

Konami have announced a *Goemon* game for the PlayStation, and it is likely to be similar to this. However, it won't be the same game.

Dreamcast ○○○○○

There will, no doubt, be a *Goemon* game released on the Dreamcast in the future, but it won't be this one.

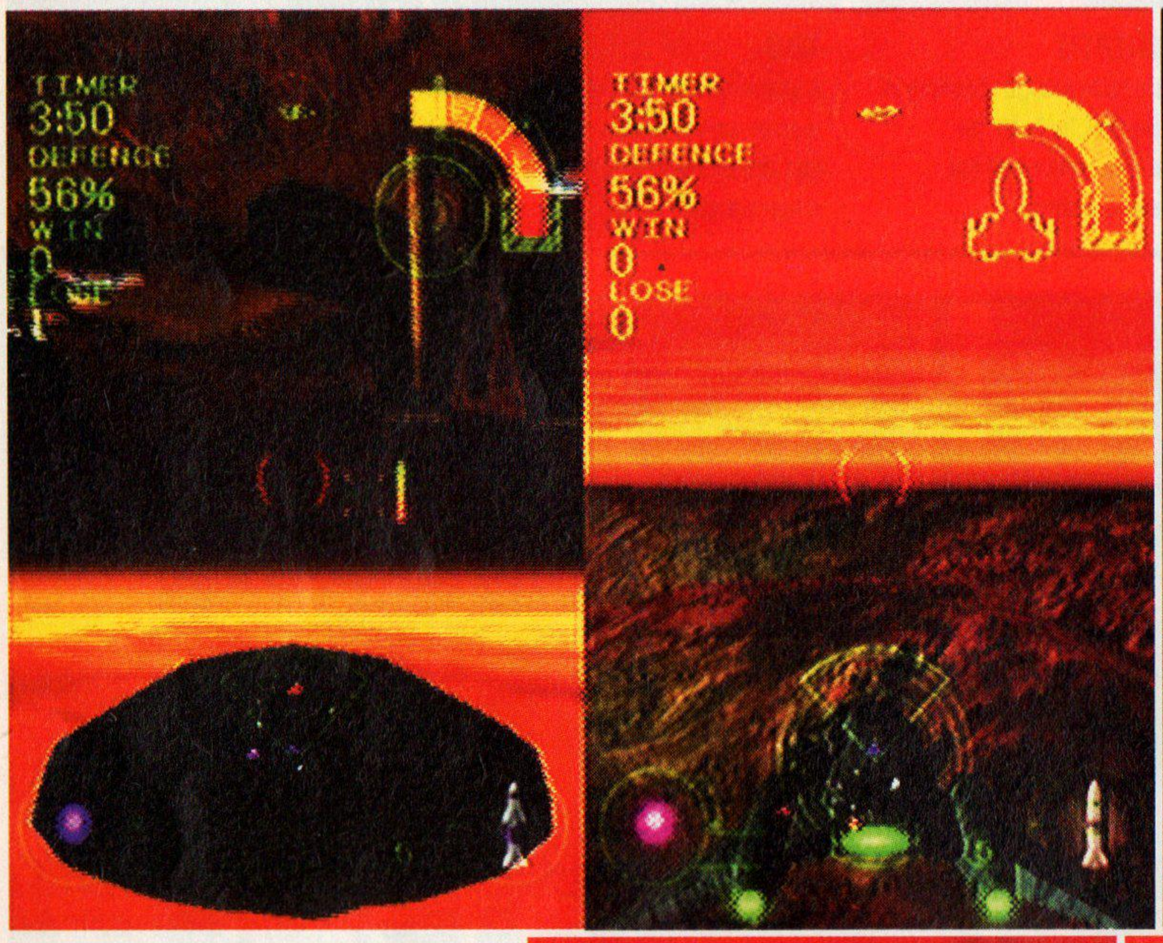
IMPORT SOFTWARE SUPPLIED BY:	PLAYGROUND PRODUCTIONS

VERDICT

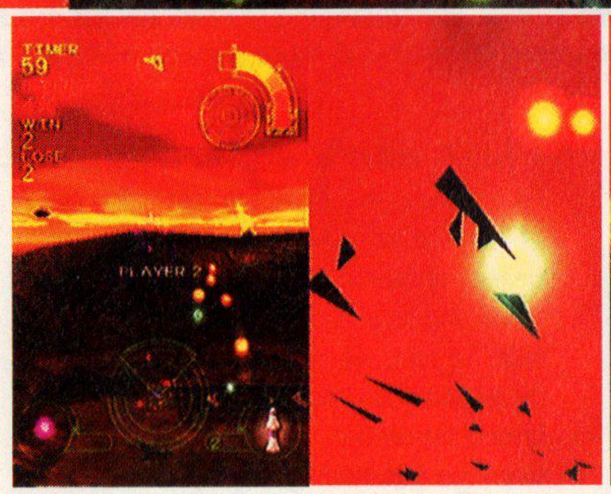
GAME NAME	Goemon's Great Adventure
GRAPHICS	70
SOUND	70
PLAYABILITY	72
OVERALL	72
Out of 100	

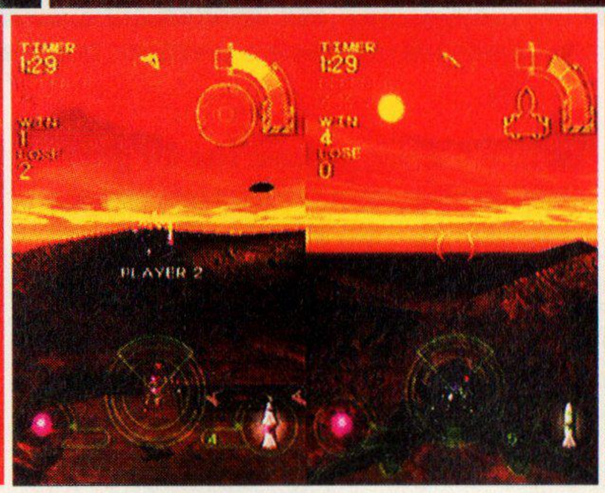
INCOMING

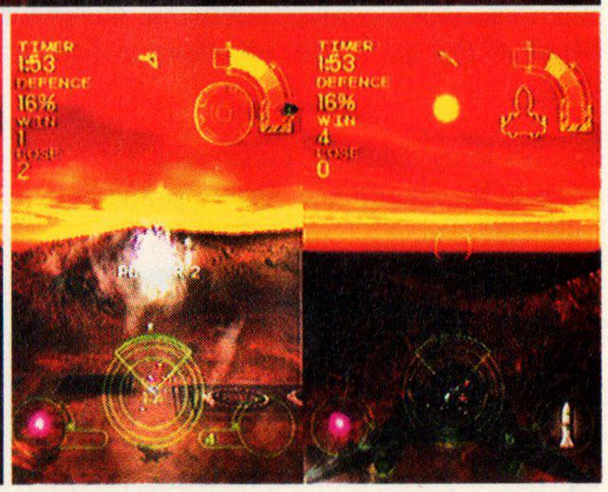
Incoming is the first of what will inevitably be **a very long line of PC conversions** to the Dreamcast. We're pleased to report that **if this one is anything** to go by, Dreamcast **owners have a LOT** to look forward to...











INFORMATION

FORMAT	Dreamcast
PUBLISHER	Imagineer
DEVELOPER	Rage Games
STYLE	Arcade Blaster
RELEASE	Out Now
PLAYGROUND PRICE	£59.99
PLAYERS	1-2
VMS	Yes
ON-LINE	No

TAKING CONTROL

You will be totally blown away with this one – it really is like watching a rendered movie, only you have total control over it. I fell in love with this game, and the game itself stumped quite a few Dreamcast haters. It plays better than the PC version quite considerably. I mean, anything that can keep me awake until 3:30 in the morning deserves to be commended. Roll on more gems like this!

Apparently in development for years, it's easy to see where all the effort has gone with *Incoming*. A lot of time has been spent on the cosmetics of the game and the control system, and all in all it has proved to be very effective use of Rage's time. It was incredibly interesting to see the way everyone in the office gathered around with cries of "Even my PC doesn't run it as smoothly as that!" And it's true, *Incoming* is as smooth as David Beckham doing a headstand on an ice rink.

I cannot emphasise the smoothness of this game enough. It shifts massive ships in great numbers without even an inkling of slowdown. The only such case I encountered was when about 30 alien interceptors were hovering around in a gorge and then scarpered as I let rip with a shower of fire from my hilltop stance – not a glitch that ruined the game, more of an advantageous stutter (it gives you that extra second or so to aim at the enemy).

In your face, you big, bad alien meany!

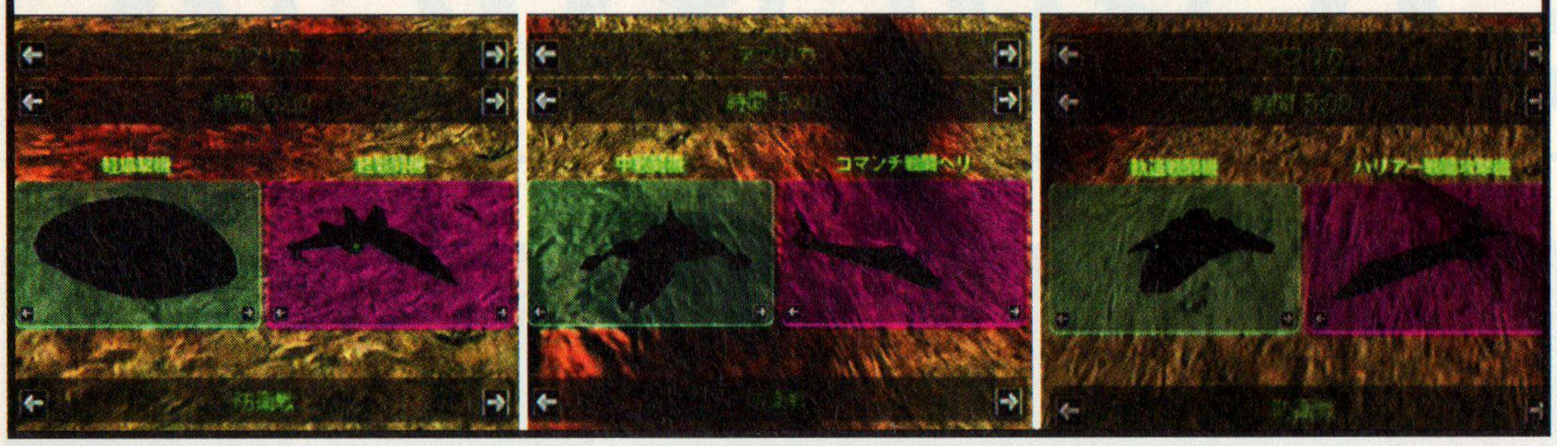
This game is exactly that – an in-your-face shooter with craft coming in from every direction. You're never short of something to kill; whether you are in the air, on a boat or in a tank, you can guarantee there is something out there that could do with some shells in its face. Some of the prime graphics are in the explosions of your opposite numbers, which give you even more of an incentive to get out there and continue destroying them with glee.

The graphics are one of the assets that really stand out in this game; sometimes I found myself firing off a missile simply to remind myself how lush the smoke trail it makes was. One of the things everyone took a dig at the Saturn for was that it was not really affiliated with shifting mountains of transparent polygons. Well, the Dreamcast does, and laughs as it's doing it. I think you will find it hard to fault this game on its graphics at this stage – it really is like watching a real-time rendered movie (as long as you can fly or drive properly!).

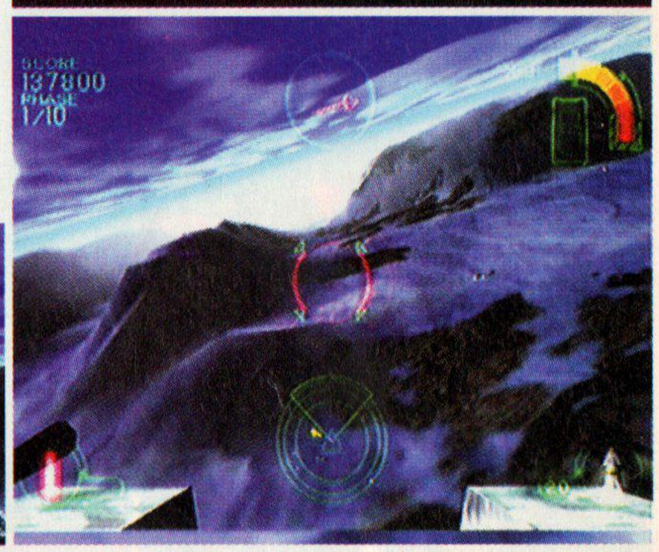
The gameplay is a key example of how good this game can get. You get

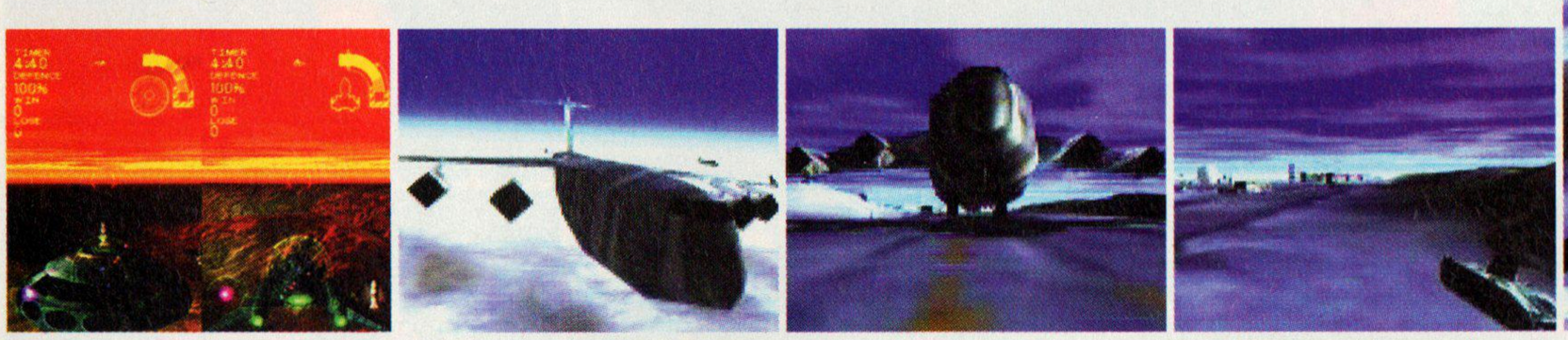
BANG, BANG – YOU'RE DEAD!

The variety of vehicles on offer in the two player mode ensures that you won't bore of it easily. Unfortunately you don't seem to be able to use any ground-based attack vehicles such as hover tanks or mounted guns. Each vehicle has both its good and bad points. For instance, the helicopters are sluggish but have the ability to blindly shoot to some extent and still hit the target. Whereas the alien interceptors are nimble and quick, but their weaponry leaves a lot to be desired.









Even this stunning selection of shots doesn't do the in-game visuals justice. When you see them in action you'll understand what all the fuss is about

given a number of different vehicles/weaponry to shoot, using some choppers, some tanks, Harriers, four-gunners mounted on tracks... the list is pretty impressive. The button controls are a pretty easy system to acquaint yourself with; the trigger buttons are used when in jets to accelerate or brake, and in helicopters to adjust altitude. Otherwise the only button needed for movement is the analogue control. As far as the firing buttons are concerned, the simplicity prevails – 'A' to fire bullets or lasers, and 'B' to unleash some homing rockets or straightforward missiles. As for view changes, these are manipulated by the 'X' and 'Y' buttons.

The opposition tend to come at you from all angles, and the element of surprise attack often prompted shouts of "Jesus Christ! Where did he come from?" The alien craft come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from your common-as-muck interceptors to your hover tanks – even the Starship Enterprise* puts in an appearance to get its butt whipped. (*It isn't really the Starship Enterprise, it simply looks like it. Hang up on your lawyer, NOW!)

2p, or not 2p. How many are there?

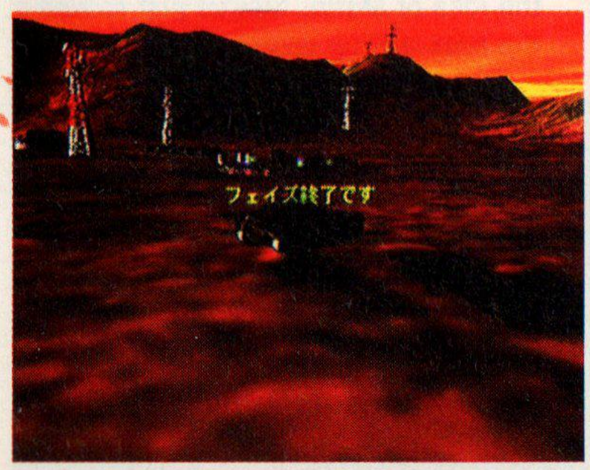
Well, you'll be pleased to know the two player experience is here. You get given a choice of about nine or ten different vehicles with which to slaughter your opponent, and unlike even the best N64 or PlayStation games, there is no compromise in the graphical finesse when playing a multiplayer game. To make the match up that little bit more special there are a heap of your favourite alien craft for the killing, so when you take time out from filling your opponent full of bullet holes, you can take down a few UFOs. The control remains the same in two player, although the vertical split screen might just get up your nose a bit if you have a small TV.

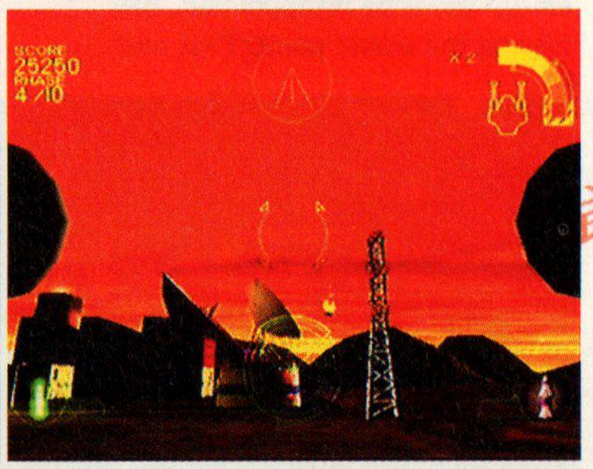
I'm a dodgy geezer

Any problems with it? The only ones I could see were the slowdown at that one point in the game that I mentioned earlier, which isn't really anything to worry about – this is, after all, an early Dreamcast game, and it surely is promising that future games will only get better. The other criticism is quite scary; there is one hell of a garish *Incoming* title on the VMS when you boot up – something to make you think some sort of horror story is on the cards (that all depends on how good you are, I suppose).

Being a Saturn owner, I have had the misfortune of playing Rage's translation of *Doom* for the machine. By this alone I decided that Rage weren't my favourite developers by a long shot, and that they should all retire to a life of wheelchairs, afternoon naps and someone else having to wipe the dribble from their chin... This game changed all that. If you are a fan of arcade blast-'em-ups then this is a Dreamcast must-have – in-your-face action with a considerable variation in playing styles, an all-rounder that adds to the list of good Dreamcast releases. Better for there to be one game like this than twenty like *July* – I hope to see more games do the machine justice like this one has. A great asset, and another addition to my shopping list. **Wayne**

IF YOU ARE A FAN OF ARCADE BLAST-'EM-UPS THEN THIS IS A DREAMCAST MUST-HAVE – IN-YOUR-FACE ACTION WITH A CONSIDERABLE VARIATION IN PLAYING STYLES





Red sky at night, slightly psychotic shoot-'em-up player in a large tank's delight

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ●●●●●

There is already a version out there on this machine, although if you desire to do the game any justice you'll need a graphically accelerated power house.

N64 ●○○○○

The superior *Battlezone* is said to be winging its way to the Nintendo, so technically there's no reason why not. No news as yet though.

PlayStation ●○○○○

It would be a pretty poor idea to attempt something this power-demanding, but then we have seen it before with others simply wishing to cash in.

IMPORT SOFTWARE SUPPLIED BY:	PLAYGROUND PRODUCTIONS

VERDICT

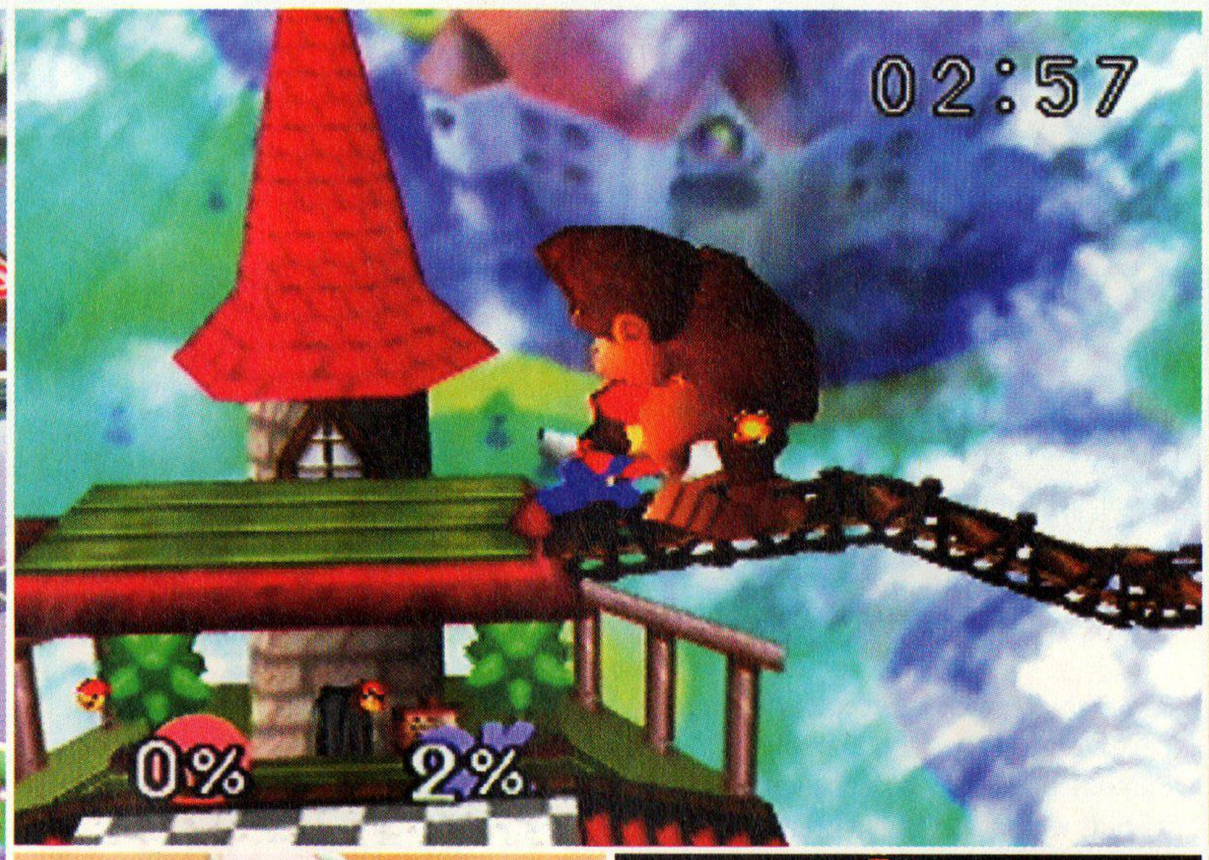
GAME NAME	Incoming
GRAPHICS	92
SOUND	85
PLAYABILITY	88
OVERALL Out of 100	88

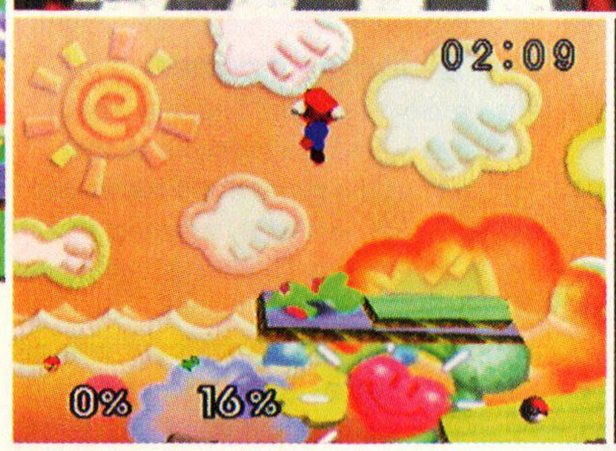
ALL-STAR SMASH BROTHERS



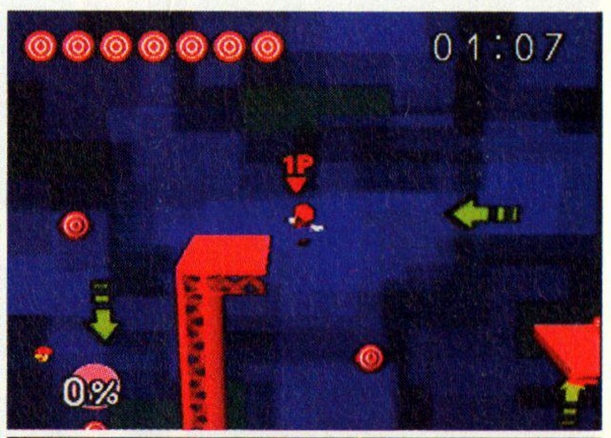


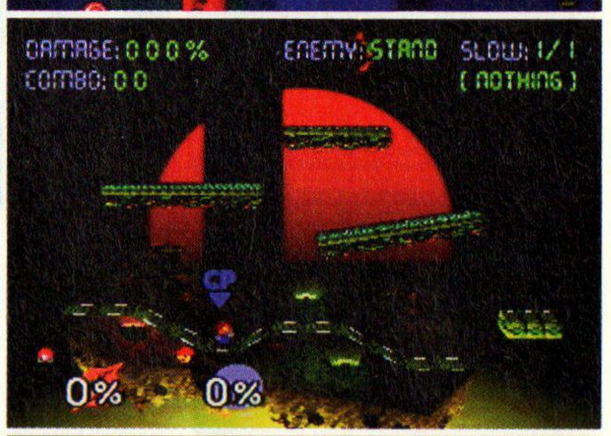


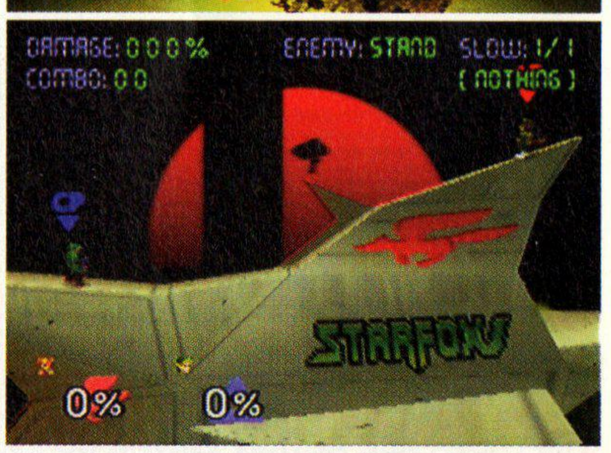












When **Nintendo announced** a **fighting game** for the N64 that **featured Mario et al**, our **ears pricked up**. What a great idea, we thought, and with Nintendo's know-how **it's bound to be great**.

TAKING CONTROL

Why haven't Nintendo thought of this before? The fun to be had just seeing the best known of Nintendo's characters in a fighting game is more than enough to keep you interested for the first ten minutes...

INFORMATION	
FORMAT	N64
PUBLISHER	Nintendo
DEVELOPER	HAL/Nintendo
STYLE	Beat-'em-up
RELEASE	Out Now
PLAYGROUND PRICE	£59.99
PLAYERS	1-4
RUMBLE PAK	Yes
MEMORY PAK	No
EXPANSION PAK	No

You are now about to enter the Twilight Zone. A place where fiction can become fact, a place where things aren't quite what they seem... and where Nintendo can produce a fighting game? Yes, that's right. In an attempt to (let's be cynical for a minute) make some more cash from the Mario phenomenon, Nintendo have licensed out their main man and sold the whole concept down the river. Okay, it's easy to be cynical, but if you take a closer look at *Smash Brothers* then you'll quickly realise that what is happening is that Nintendo are doing everything in their power to add some variety to the N64's software library. If you're expecting a Namco or Sega-style beat-'em-up you'll be disappointed, nay missing the whole point. First and foremost, as with the majority of NCL titles, *Smash Brothers* is fun. Of course, Nintendo would never sell out the idea of Mario; they've just moved the beat-'em-up goalposts a little...







The fighters are wonderfully varied. For example, Kirby (left) can swallow his enemies and take on their characteristics. Donkey Kong Jr. is by far the most powerful (right)

MEET THE CONTENDERS

If you're a devoted fan of Nintendo games, you'll already recognise this crowd. Here's the low-down on who's up for the coveted title of Champion Smash Brother.



MARIO
A good all-round fighter. Fast and fairly powerful with trademark (?) Dragon Punch.
Previous fight experience: Oh, come on – it's Mario.



YOSHI
Has the ability to swallow his opponents and lay them as eggs.
Previous fight experience: Super Mario World, Mario Kart, Yoshi's Island, Super Mario Kart, Yoshi's Story.



SAMUS
The only female character in the game. Can roll into a ball and lay bombs.
Previous fight experience: Metroid, Metroid 2, Super Metroid.



PIKACHU
The young contender. Has the useful ability to electrocute his foes.
Previous fight experience: Pokémon (GB), Pokémon Stadium, Pokémon Snap, Pikachu Genki De Chu.



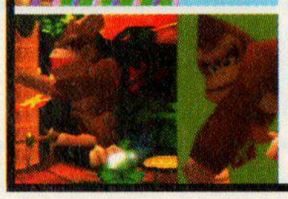
LINK
He can attack enemies from long-range with boomerang and hookshot.
Previous fight experience: The Legend of Zelda, Link's Adventure, A Link to the Past, Link's Awakening, Ocarina of Time.



FOX MCCLOUD
His main weapon is the trusty blaster at his side, no sign of the rest of his team.
Previous fight experience: Star Fox, Star Fox 64.



KIRBY
A pink blob who can consume enemies and take on some of their moves.
Previous experience: Kirby's Air Ride, Kirby's Adventure.



DONKEY KONG JR.
A big powerful monkey. That's all you need to know.
Previous experience: Donkey Kong Jr., Mario Kart, Donkey Kong Country, Mario Kart 64.

Expand your horizons

Smash Brothers is one of the easiest pick-up-and-play titles I've ever seen. The moves are simply executed with a combination of the A and B buttons and the C buttons. You have a physical attack button, a special attack button, and a jump button. Simple enough, but put these in different combinations with directions on the analogue stick and you have a surprisingly varied number of moves. It's so easy to play you'll be pulling off some of the more spectacular moves within minutes. Instant gratification – that's what we like.

As with most games of this genre, *Smash Brothers* is best played in multiplayer, and best of all in four player. Here you have a variety of options: you can play a free for all, two on two, or one on three – you can also set the game mode so that games can be decided on ring outs or on a time limit where a points system comes into play.

As an added bonus to the gameplay, there are a variety of power-ups that can be used in the game. These appear randomly, and can often turn a fight to your favour. They include laser guns, fire flowers and, best of all, Pokémon eggs which when hatched give birth to a Pocket Monster capable of inflicting damage on your enemies.

The one player mode is not to be ignored either, and instead of the usual one on one fighting until you reach a game boss as you find most fighting games, *Smash Brothers* does things a little differently. Sure, there are one on one fights, but there's also bonus games (mini platform games if you like) where you have to hit a certain number of targets in a time limit, fights with three on your side against a giant Donkey Kong (the original, not junior), and even a fight against 20 Yoshis. As it is the one player mode is great fun and reflects the game's origins – the development house that continues to innovate.

SMASH BROTHERS BRILLIANTLY ACHIEVES WHAT IT SETS OUT TO DO, AND THAT IS TO BRING NINTENDO'S SEAL OF QUALITY TO THE FIGHTING GENRE

All of your favourites

There's also a fair amount of innovation in the arenas. While these are basically two dimensional, they are all multi-levelled, and each is different enough to offer the opportunity to employ a different tactic each time. They are also all themed by each character's famous tunes.

All of the characters are a joy to use, completely individual, and feature their trademark moves. Donkey Kong has his ground stomp, Link can use his boomerang and hookshot, and Samus can roll onto a ball and drop bombs. Part of the fun of taking on each character is using these moves from other games in a totally different context.

Smash Brothers does have its limitations – its very nature and the lack of moves means that the game's longevity has to be called into question; once you've completed the one player mode then all you're left with is the multiplayer game. Lots of fun, but it perhaps owes a little too much to good fortune for hardened games players. Having said that, though, *Smash Brothers* brilliantly achieves what it sets out to do, and that is to bring Nintendo's seal of quality to the fighting genre. What we have been presented with is a fine example of how to innovate within a genre, and Nintendo should be applauded for doing just that. **Nick**

OTHER FORMATS?

PC ○○○○○
Even if this wasn't a Nintendo game, you would never see a game like this on the PC. It's just too... Nintendo.

PlayStation ○○○○○
Are you mad?

Dreamcast ○○○○○
Don't count against a *Smash Brothers* clone appearing on the Dreamcast in the near future, but as for this specific title, no way.

IMPORT SOFTWARE SUPPLIED BY:	PLAYGROUND PRODUCTIONS

VERDICT

GAME NAME	Smash Brothers
GRAPHICS	60
SOUND	60
PLAYABILITY	80
OVERALL Out of 100	80

QUANTITY CONTROL

VIRTUAL POOL 64

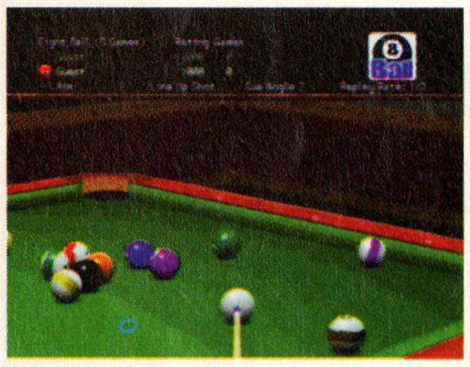
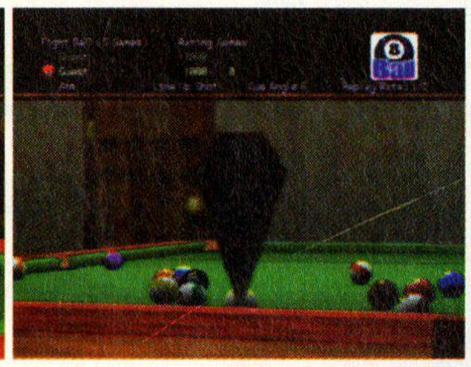
Platform: **Nintendo 64** Publisher: **Grave Entertainment** Developer: **Celeris** Style: **Pool Sim** Release: **Out Now (US)** Playground Price: **£49.99**
Players: **1-2** Rumble Pak: **No** Memory Pak: **Yes** Memory Expansion: **No**

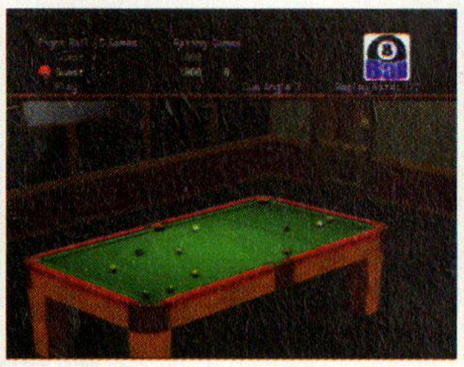
Pool games are always much of a muchness. These days they are mostly spot on in terms of ball physics and graphics, and they usually have a great variety of different games within them, but they are without exception all hampered by one overriding factor: simulated pool can never be as good as the real thing.

Inevitably, *Virtual Pool 64* falls into this trap. But on the up side of things, this is certainly the best ever pool simulation on any system I've seen. The graphics on the usually foggy N64 are crystal clear, and the balls look wonderfully spherical. The game itself offers almost every option you could want and almost every type of game you could want to play, from nine-ball to ten-ball pool, to unknown (in the UK, at least) games such as Bank Pool and Rotation. *VP 64* is complimented by the best control method seen in this type of game, which even allows you to change the camera angle at any time to see the action more clearly and give you better idea of what's going on on the table.

An excellent piece of software only hampered by the fact that you'll have more fun at your local pub.

Nick VERDICT: **78%**




CHAMELEON TWIST 2

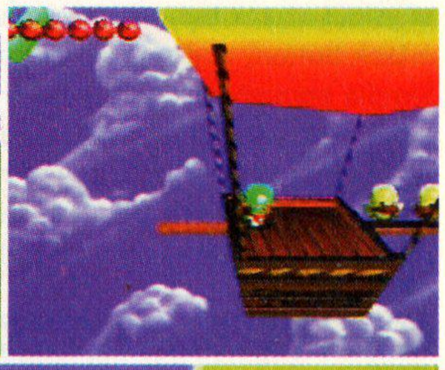
Platform: **N64** Publisher: **Japan Supply System** Developer: **In-House** Style: **3D Platformer** Release: **Out Now**
Playground Price: **£49.99** Players: **One** Rumble Pak: **Yes** Memory Pak: **Yes** Expansion Pak: **No**

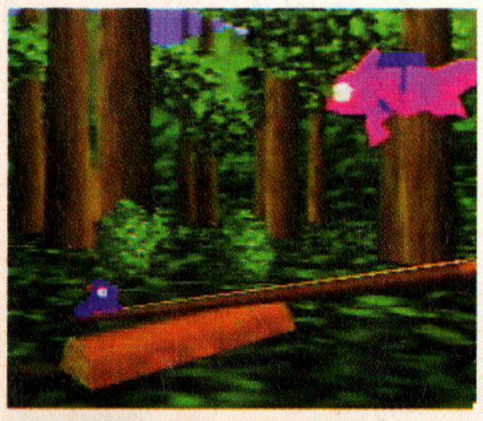
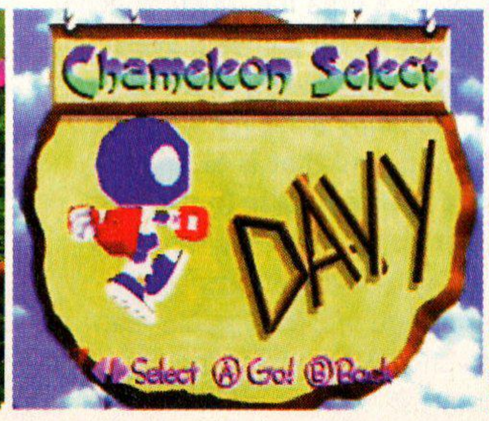
The original *Chameleon Twist* promised much; it attempted to emulate the great *Mario 64* with a few innovative additional touches of its own. However, it fell a long way short of *Mario*, and the game could actually be completed in about half an hour.

Chameleon Twist 2 is essentially a 2D platformer with a few exploration bits and one or two multiple routes. The linear nature of the game (players are guided by arrows) is only broken up by a few areas that you can explore and gain power-ups. The big 'innovation' with this game is with the control of the character – a 'loveable' little chameleon. You have control over his sticky tongue, and this can be used in a variety of different ways, usually as a way of reaching platforms as a pole vault type of thing. You also have the ability to eat up the enemies and spit them out as projectiles in a Yoshi kind of way.

The trouble with *Chameleon Twist 2* is that it far too short-lived and will only appeal to people with limited gaming experience. Graphics are nothing special – same goes for the level design – and you'll probably be bored within half an hour. Nothing more than an average platformer.

Nick VERDICT: **50%**



SNOW SPEEDER



Platform: **Nintendo 64** Publisher: **Imagineer** Developer: **In-House** Style: **Skiing Sim**
Release: **Out Now** Playground Price: **£49.99** Players: **1-2**
Rumble Pak: **Yes** Memory Pak: **Yes** Memory Expansion: **No**

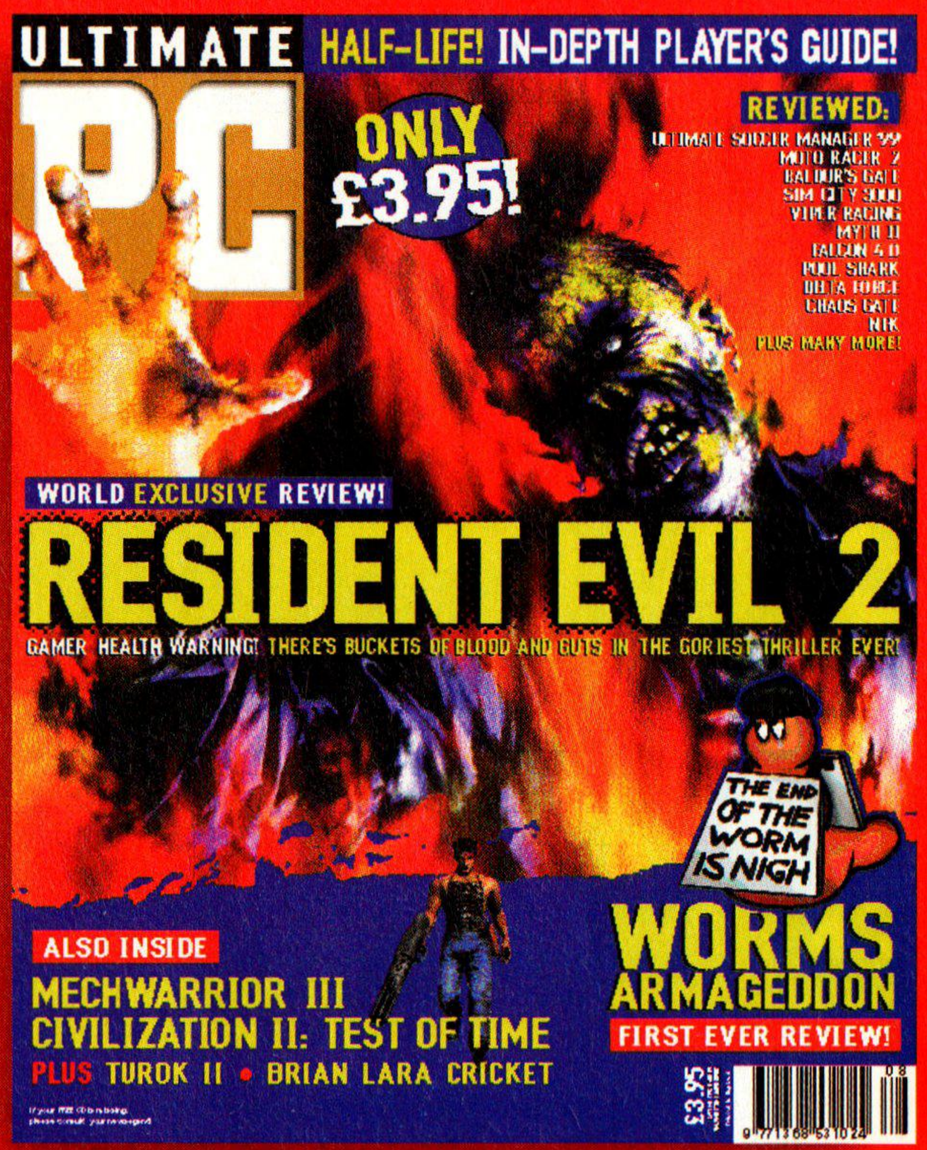
The winter sports craze continues. However, *Snow Speeder,* from Imagineer, is highly unlikely to ever make it to these shores; it's one of the worst in the genre ever. The game has poor, unresponsive controls, only four courses and is far too slow to pass for a racing game. On the plus side, however, the courses are of a decent length and feature multiple routes. For tricks junkies out there, there are plenty of opportunities to pull off the skiing equivalent of all the misty grabs and suchlike that snowboarding boasts.

To add insult to injury, the clichéd voice-over is easily the worst ever, and the music is downright diabolical – some sort of Japanese midi approximation of 'the done thing'. Snow Speeder's game engine is the most disappointing aspect of the experience – it's too sluggish and the graphics produced are basic to say the least. As for replay value, there is a two player mode, but the speed of this is almost unplayable. The bottom line is that if you've *1080° Snowboarding* then you have no need for this whatsoever.

Nick VERDICT: **25%**

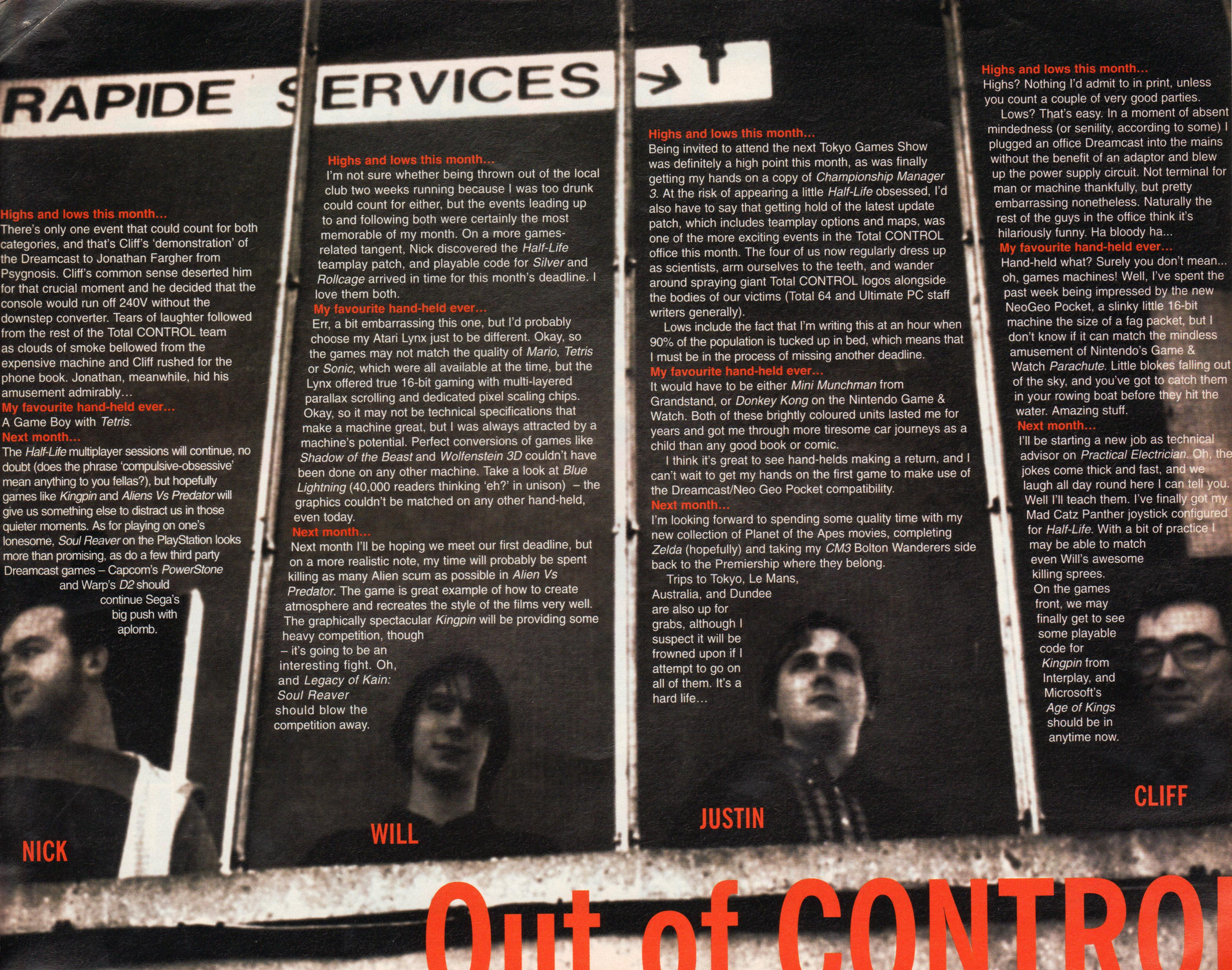
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RAPIDE SERVICES



NICK

Highs and lows this month...

There's only one event that could count for both categories, and that's Cliff's 'demonstration' of the Dreamcast to Jonathan Fargher from Psygnosis. Cliff's common sense deserted him for that crucial moment and he decided that the console would run off 240V without the downstep converter. Tears of laughter followed from the rest of the Total CONTROL team as clouds of smoke bellowed from the expensive machine and Cliff rushed for the phone book. Jonathan, meanwhile, hid his amusement admirably...

My favourite hand-held ever...

A Game Boy with *Tetris*.

Next month...

The *Half-Life* multiplayer sessions will continue, no doubt (does the phrase 'compulsive-obsessive' mean anything to you fellas?), but hopefully games like *Kingpin* and *Aliens Vs Predator* will give us something else to distract us in those quieter moments. As for playing on one's lonesome, *Soul Reaver* on the PlayStation looks more than promising, as do a few third party Dreamcast games – Capcom's *PowerStone* and Warp's *D2* should continue Sega's big push with aplomb.

WILL

Highs and lows this month...

I'm not sure whether being thrown out of the local club two weeks running because I was too drunk could count for either, but the events leading up to and following both were certainly the most memorable of my month. On a more games-related tangent, Nick discovered the *Half-Life* teamplay patch, and playable code for *Silver* and *Rollcage* arrived in time for this month's deadline. I love them both.

My favourite hand-held ever...

Err, a bit embarrassing this one, but I'd probably choose my Atari Lynx just to be different. Okay, so the games may not match the quality of *Mario*, *Tetris* or *Sonic*, which were all available at the time, but the Lynx offered true 16-bit gaming with multi-layered parallax scrolling and dedicated pixel scaling chips. Okay, so it may not be technical specifications that make a machine great, but I was always attracted by a machine's potential. Perfect conversions of games like *Shadow of the Beast* and *Wolfenstein 3D* couldn't have been done on any other machine. Take a look at *Blue Lightning* (40,000 readers thinking 'eh?' in unison) – the graphics couldn't be matched on any other hand-held, even today.

Next month...

Next month I'll be hoping we meet our first deadline, but on a more realistic note, my time will probably be spent killing as many Alien scum as possible in *Alien Vs Predator*. The game is great example of how to create atmosphere and recreates the style of the films very well. The graphically spectacular *Kingpin* will be providing some heavy competition, though – it's going to be an interesting fight. Oh, and *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* should blow the competition away.

JUSTIN

Highs and lows this month...

Being invited to attend the next Tokyo Games Show was definitely a high point this month, as was finally getting my hands on a copy of *Championship Manager 3*. At the risk of appearing a little *Half-Life* obsessed, I'd also have to say that getting hold of the latest update patch, which includes teamplay options and maps, was one of the more exciting events in the Total CONTROL office this month. The four of us now regularly dress up as scientists, arm ourselves to the teeth, and wander around spraying giant Total CONTROL logos alongside the bodies of our victims (Total 64 and Ultimate PC staff writers generally).

Lows include the fact that I'm writing this at an hour when 90% of the population is tucked up in bed, which means that I must be in the process of missing another deadline.

My favourite hand-held ever...

It would have to be either *Mini Munchman* from Grandstand, or *Donkey Kong* on the Nintendo Game & Watch. Both of these brightly coloured units lasted me for years and got me through more tiresome car journeys as a child than any good book or comic.

I think it's great to see hand-helds making a return, and I can't wait to get my hands on the first game to make use of the Dreamcast/Neo Geo Pocket compatibility.

Next month...

I'm looking forward to spending some quality time with my new collection of Planet of the Apes movies, completing *Zelda* (hopefully) and taking my *CM3* Bolton Wanderers side back to the Premiership where they belong.

Trips to Tokyo, Le Mans, Australia, and Dundee are also up for grabs, although I suspect it will be frowned upon if I attempt to go on all of them. It's a hard life...

CLIFF

Highs and lows this month...

Highs? Nothing I'd admit to in print, unless you count a couple of very good parties.

Lows? That's easy. In a moment of absent mindedness (or senility, according to some) I plugged an office Dreamcast into the mains without the benefit of an adaptor and blew up the power supply circuit. Not terminal for man or machine thankfully, but pretty embarrassing nonetheless. Naturally the rest of the guys in the office think it's hilariously funny. Ha bloody ha...

My favourite hand-held ever...

Hand-held what? Surely you don't mean... oh, games machines! Well, I've spent the past week being impressed by the new NeoGeo Pocket, a slinky little 16-bit machine the size of a fag packet, but I don't know if it can match the mindless amusement of Nintendo's Game & Watch *Parachute*. Little blokes falling out of the sky, and you've got to catch them in your rowing boat before they hit the water. Amazing stuff.

Next month...

I'll be starting a new job as technical advisor on *Practical Electrician*. Oh, the jokes come thick and fast, and we laugh all day round here I can tell you. Well I'll teach them. I've finally got my Mad Catz Panther joystick configured for *Half-Life*. With a bit of practice I may be able to match even Will's awesome killing sprees. On the games front, we may finally get to see some playable code for *Kingpin* from Interplay, and Microsoft's *Age of Kings* should be in anytime now.

Out of CONTRO

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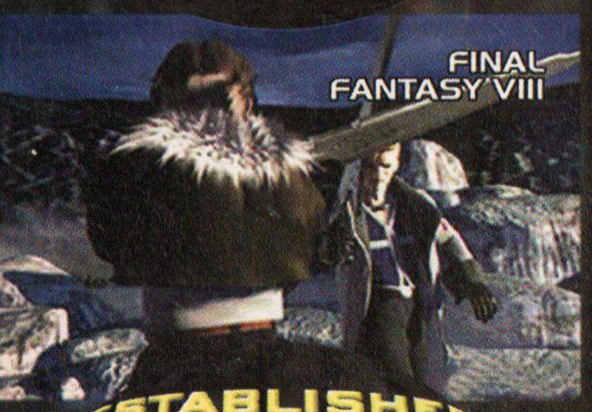
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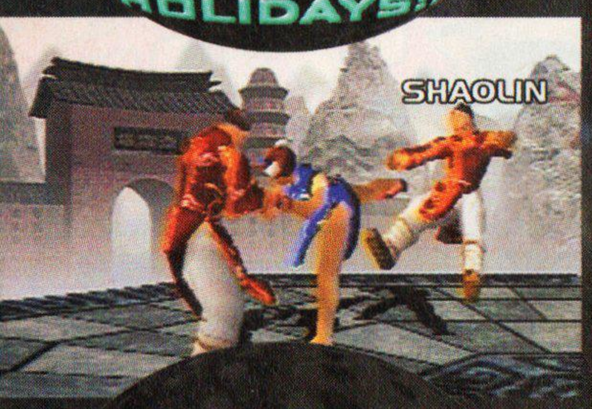
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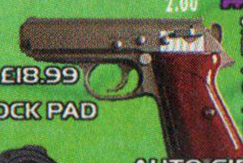
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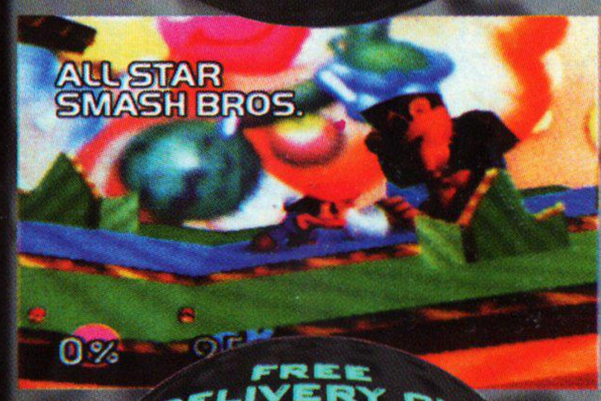
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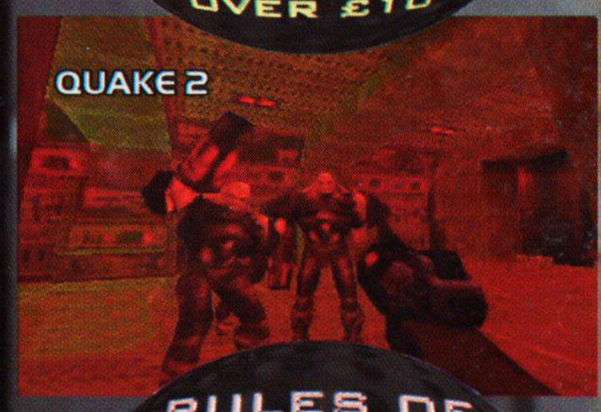
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